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Judiciary panel debates Trump impeachment; vote approaches

By MARY CLARE JALONICK
AND LISA MASCARO
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House Judiciary Committee argued through a marathon session Thursday ahead of voting on articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump, the latest big step as the politically split panel prepares to send the charges to the full House.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi sounded confident Democrats will have the votes to impeach the president next week but said it is up to individual lawmakers to weigh the evidence and decide for themselves. Republicans seem unwavering in their opposition to expelling Trump.

"The fact is we take an oath to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States," Pelosi told reporters. "No one is above the law; the president will be held accountable for his abuse of power and his obstruction of Congress."

Trump, apparently watching the live proceedings on television, tweeted his criticism of two Democratic women on the panel, Reps. Veronica Escobar and Sheila Jackson Lee, both of Texas. He called their comments about his actions inaccurate.

SEE JUDICIARY ON PAGE 11



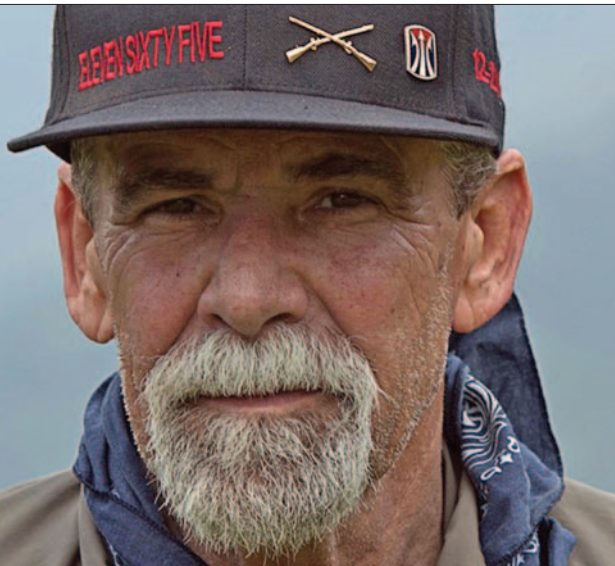
ANDREW HANNIN/AP

Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, listens during a House Judiciary Committee markup of the articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump on Thursday in Washington.

VETERANS

Michael McDonald-Low poses March 9, 2012, the day he led a Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command mission to the site where Spc. Clifford Van Arsdale was killed May 11, 1968, in what was then South Vietnam.

Defense Department



UNACCOUNTABLE

A Vietnam veteran's 10-year quest to bring his soldier home

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

Pushing through dense foliage toward the site of the bygone ambush, Michael McDonald-Low felt like he was floating through time.

He had longed for this day, planning thoroughly for the time he would return to this hillside in Vietnam's Que Son Valley where many of his infantry company were wounded or killed by a hail of North Vietnamese gunfire on May 11, 1968. The body of one of those soldiers in the platoon he commanded, Spc. Clifford Van Arts-

dalen, had never been recovered.

That fateful trek was etched like a grave-stone inscription in his mind as he retraced his steps during this mission on March 9, 2012, to pinpoint the exact location of Van Arsdale's death so that his remains could be found and returned home.

He pressed on to find the split in the trail where he had sent Van Arsdale and two other soldiers ahead to secure the route.

Soon after finding it, McDonald-Low was joined by the other 11 members of the mission team from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Agency, the U.S. Defense Department body tasked at that time with finding

America's lost warfighters.

McDonald-Low was confident that this was the exact location where Van Arsdale was killed, he told Stars and Stripes during a series of interviews about his search. With the location pinpointed — the government for years had been working with an erroneous place and date of his death — the way was finally clear to find and repatriate the soldier's remains.

Seven years later, nothing has changed. McDonald-Low's quest to bring him home is no further along than it was then.

And there is little time left.

SEE UNACCOUNTABLE ON PAGE 8

WAR

US troops clean up after Bagram attack

By J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — A pair of Taliban bombs detonated by suicide attackers at a nearby hospital shattered windows and damaged buildings at Bagram Airfield, spurring cleanup efforts after Wednesday's failed attempt by the insurgents to breach the base.

Pictures released by the Air Force on Thursday showed airmen walking through dust and debris as they repaired parts of the passenger terminal, one of the base's busiest locations. Airmen cleared away broken metal and ceiling tiles during cleanup operations elsewhere on base Wednesday and Thursday.

The attack began at 6 a.m. Wednesday, when Taliban suicide bombers blasted the under-construction hospital in a bid to storm the base. The blasts destroyed several houses outside the base and left at least two Afghan civilians dead and 80 injured, Afghan officials said.

The hospital, which was being rebuilt for use by locals, is on the boundary line of the base and has a gate leading into it, said Mohammad Mahfooz Alizada, Parwan's police chief.

Sporadic shooting continued throughout the day as some armed fighters hid within the medical facility, leading one engineer to pause and chamber a round in his pistol upon hearing nearby gunfire, the caption of an Air Force photo said.

Five service members from the nation of Georgia received minor injuries during the assault, the Georgian Defense Ministry said in a statement.

The insurgents never entered the base, and the daylight fight ended with a series of U.S. airstrikes killing the holdout attackers, NATO officials said.

Orange flames amid billowing smoke filled the skyline Wednesday evening as the clash drew to a close.

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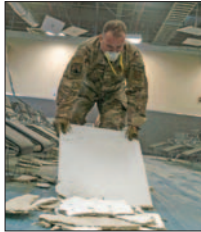
PHOTOS BY BRANDON CRIBELAR/U.S. Air Force

Air Force airmen from the 405th Expeditionary Support Squadron remove damaged metal and ceiling tiles Thursday in the passenger terminal the day after a Taliban attack near Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.



BRIGITTE N. BRANTLEY/U.S. Air Force

Senior Airman Mytchell Collingridge helps with recovery operations Wednesday before the "all clear" is given at Bagram Airfield.



Tech. Sgt. Ryan Schell, a U.S. Central Command Materiel Recovery Element technician, cleans up.



Air Force airmen clear debris from Bagram's passenger terminal.

DOD keeps Afghan food supplier despite fraud charges

By AARON GREGG
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department is allowing its primary supplier of food and water for troops in Afghanistan to continue doing business with the U.S. military even though fraud charges against three former executives resulted in a \$45 million settlement.

Dubai-based logistics company Anham is at least the third supplier to be involved in massive fraud allegations for the Defense Logistics Agency's primary Afghan troop supply contract. Anham's former Virginia-based subsidiary, Unitrans International, agreed to pay the settlement last week to resolve federal criminal and civil complaints of obstruction and making

false claims.

The settlement highlights how the U.S. military effort in Afghanistan, which has stretched for nearly two decades and cost taxpayers at least \$1 trillion, has consistently created opportunities for fraud.

Three executives associated with Anham, including longtime chief executive Abul Huda Farouki, were indicted by the Justice Department last year. They were accused of setting up a fake construction scene to overstate progress on a warehouse, jacking up prices for basic items sold to deployed military units and illegally shipping products through Iran.

In January, Anham was suspended in relation to the fraud charges and barred from applying for any future opportuni-

ties with the U.S. government. However, the suspension was soon lifted because the Defense Logistics Agency entered into an "administrative agreement" that allowed the company to continue its work, providing food and water to 13,000 troops stationed in Afghanistan.

In a lengthy statement on its website, Anham said it has agreed to "review and continue to strengthen" its internal compliance programs and cooperate with future investigations.

Farouki, his brother Mazen and another executive named Salah Maarouf were charged with counts including fraud and conspiracy. The charges were dismissed Dec. 3 after federal prosecutors entered into a nonprosecution agreement with the

three, records show.

The Defense Logistics Agency has put the contract out for new bids, hoping to find a way forward. Anham, however, remains eligible and is one of the bidders on the new contract, according to court documents. An award date has not been determined.

The settlement is the latest example of a private company using the war in Afghanistan to earn excessive profits at U.S. taxpayers' expense. The supplier before Anham, a Swiss company called Supreme Foodservice GmbH, pleaded guilty to similar charges and paid \$288 million in criminal fines. The supplier before that, a Kuwaiti company called Agility Public Warehousing, spent \$95 million to resolve civil fraud charges of its own.

MILITARY

USMC: Release of pollutant on Okinawa poses little risk

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND AYA ICHIHASHI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The inadvertent release of a banned pollutant in firefighting foam at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma created “minimal to no impact” on the environment, Marine officials said this week.

The incident occurred Dec. 5 when an auxiliary power unit in an aircraft hangar was inadvertently switched on, activating a fire suppression system, Marine Corps Installations Pacific spokesman 1st Lt. Tim Hayes wrote Wednesday in an email to Stars and Stripes. The system released an unknown amount of firefighting foam.

No injuries or property damage were reported.

“Approximately 99 percent of the ... firefighting foam, and contaminated water has been contained and cleaned up,” Hayes said in the email.

“The environmental team on site has determined that the environmental impact to the area is minimal to no impact, and there is no safety concern to the public,” he said. “Proper procedures to prevent recurrence has been briefed to all military and civilian personnel regarding the use of the auxiliary power unit and other equipment in confined spaces.”

Japanese Defense Minister Taro Kono told reporters Tuesday

that the foam contained perfluorooctanesulfonic acid, or PFOS, a synthetic, organic acid known to cause tumors, increases in body and organ weight and death in animals.

PFOS and its sister acid, perfluorooctanoic acid, or PFOA, are found in firefighting foam, aircraft grease, water-repellent materials and fluorine chemicals.

Japan has no guidelines on safe levels of either chemical, but health advisories in the United States are issued for drinking water at levels of 0.07 micrograms per liter and above. Their manufacture and importation have been prohibited in Japan since 2010.

The chemicals are still in use in



CARLOS VAZQUEZ/Stars and Stripes

Firefighting foam from Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, seen above, was reported to have had “minimal to no impact” on the environment in Okinawa.

firefighting foam on U.S. military installations in Okinawa but are being phased out, U.S. military officials have said.

The Okinawa Defense Bureau, which represents the Defense Ministry, said it was waiting for further details on the incident.

“Marine officials informed us that they cleaned the majority of the firefighting chemical foam

from the facility and they did not see anything that spilled or leaked off base,” a bureau spokesman said Wednesday. “Marine officials said there is no concerns for the environment and they will retrain their people so that this won’t happen again.”

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Ex-USAF employee in Germany pleads guilty to lying about theft

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

A former civilian employee of the U.S. Air Force in Germany pleaded guilty Tuesday to lying to federal investigators about stealing more than \$144,000 in government funds, according to a news release from the Justice Department.

Gregory Burris, 48, of Miesau, Germany, pleaded guilty to one count of making false statements before U.S. Magistrate Judge Karen B. Molzen of the District of New Mexico. A sentencing date

has not been set. Court records indicate he faces between 12 and 18 months in prison and a fine of up to \$55,000.

Burris worked between 2013 and 2016 as a resource adviser assigned to a multinational electronic warfare training facility, known as the Polygone, in Bann, Germany, near Ramstein Air Base. His responsibilities included generating and transmitting invoices and payment instructions to foreign militaries for their use of the NATO training facilities, according to the news release.

Between early 2015 and early

2016, Burris generated and transmitted six invoices to foreign militaries for money owed to the U.S. government for expenses related to Polygone-sponsored training exercises and directed those militaries to transmit payment of the invoices to Burris’ personal checking account held jointly with his wife at a German bank, rather than the authorized Defense Department bank account, according to the news release.

More than \$144,950 landed in Burris’ bank account from the foreign militaries, including the Royal Netherlands Air Force, the

Swedish armed forces, the German Ministry of Defense, the Spanish air force and the Danish armed forces.

The court could order Burris to repay the money to the government, according to court documents.

The Air Force Office of Special Investigations began looking into the missing funds in February 2018, according to court documents.

When agents interviewed Burris on Aug. 29, 2018, at Kirtland Air Force Base near Albuquerque, N.M., he falsely stated that

after receiving the deposits, he wire-transferred the funds to a Defense Department account in person at the local branch of his bank in Germany, according to the news release.

Burris had actually used the entirety of the funds to pay for personal expenses.

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Australia’s \$715M in upgrades will benefit US ships

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

Upgrades worth \$715 million to naval facilities in Australia’s Northern Territory will mean more support for visiting U.S. warships, according to an Australian defense expert.

The improvements are being made to an Australian naval base, HMAS Coonawarra, and the Larrakeyah Defence Precinct in Darwin, the Australian Department of Defence said in a Dec. 11 email.

The enhancements are designed to support new Australian vessels used for border protection, but they will also be useful for visiting Navy ships, former Australian Assistant Defense Secretary Ross Babbage said Wednesday in a telephone interview.

A number of American warships have called on Darwin this year, including the destroyer USS Stockdale, the mine countermeasures ship USS Patriot and the submarine tender USS Emory S. Land, U.S. 7th Fleet news releases show.

The port has been a focus of a

rebalance of U.S. military forces to the Pacific, begun under the Obama administration and seen as a reaction to China’s rapidly growing military. The Marine Corps, which deployed a rotational force there for the first time in 2012, sent an air-ground task force of 2,500 Marines to Darwin for six months this past summer.

Air bases in the Northern Territory are also being upgraded. At the Royal Australian Air Force base at Darwin, for example, \$88.65 million worth of projects have been awarded to build fuel tanks, expand the airfield and erect maintenance facilities. Upgrades at nearby Tindal air base are also planned.

Australia’s Defence Department, in an earlier email, said the naval upgrades at Darwin include \$272 million for a new outer wharf to support major surface combatant ships, with associated fuel storage and refueling facilities by 2023.

Upgrades of the inner harbor at Coonawarra will support the home-porting of six out of 12 new Arafura-class offshore pa-

trol vessels being introduced into the Royal Australian Navy over the next decade, the department said.

“Around \$220 million of proposed works includes dredging the inner basin, upgrades to the existing wharves to accommodate the significantly larger new vessels,” the department said.

The funding will also pay for logistics, maintenance and other work areas, with construction due for completion by mid-2026. Another \$223 million will upgrade infrastructure at the Larrakeyah Defence Precinct to support

growth for the next 25 years, the department said.

“Beyond these projects, there are no plans for further investment in new naval basing capabilities in the Northern Territory,” the department said.

However, Babbage predicted there will be ongoing development of naval facilities in the Northern Territory.

“The details are still being sorted out, but you will see quite a bit more in the next three to four years,” he said.

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MILITARY

House approves \$738B defense policy bill

By PAUL SONNE
AND KAROUN DEMIRJIAN
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The House passed a \$738 billion defense policy bill Wednesday, a step toward establishing the Space Force and introducing parental leave for federal workers, as dozens of liberals signaled their dissatisfaction with compromises Democratic lawmakers reached by voting against the legislation.

President Donald Trump said he would sign the bill after striking a deal with House Democrats that permits the creation of the Space Force as a sixth branch of the military, one of his top priorities at the Pentagon, in exchange for extending 12 weeks of paid parental leave to more than 2 million federal workers, a victory for Democratic lawmakers. Federal workers at the moment don't have guaranteed access to paid family leave.

The bill passed in the House in a 377-48 vote. Those who voted against it were primarily liberal Democrats who felt the compromise version of the legislation hammered out with the Republican-led Senate offered up too many concessions, including a top-line authorization that gives

\$22 billion more to defense than last year, plus another \$5.3 billion for disaster recovery on military installations.

Known as the National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA, the annual bill sets out priorities for the Pentagon and funding targets for programs. Congressional appropriators ultimately will decide how much federal money the Pentagon receives for those priorities in budget legislation. The compromise bill, having passed in the House, will face a Senate vote slated for next week.

In a tweet Wednesday before the House vote, Trump said he would sign the bill when it reaches his desk and appeared to take credit for its provision on paid parental leave, even though Democratic lawmakers pushed for that measure as a trade for the Space Force, facing down Republican opposition to the expansion of federal worker benefits.

"Wow! All of our priorities have made it into the final NDAA: Pay Raise for our Troops, Rebuilding our Military, Paid Parental Leave, Border Security, and Space Force!" Trump wrote. "Congress — don't delay this anymore! I will sign this historic defense legislation immediately!"

The president's daughter and adviser Ivanka Trump has made pushing for paid family leave a central part of her formal duties at the White House.

The Republican-led Senate's version of the bill didn't include a provision on paid parental leave for federal workers. The provision grew out of legislation led by Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y., chairwoman of the House Oversight Committee, which was then tacked onto the House version of the defense policy bill. Democratic lawmakers then fought for its inclusion in the compromise version of the defense policy bill with the Senate.

The bill would authorize a 3.1% pay raise for service members and would repeal what's known as the "widow's tax," or regulations that penalize military spouses collecting benefits from the government owing to the death of their partner. It also authorizes sanctions aimed at pipe-laying ships involved in Russia's construction of a new gas pipeline to Europe under the Baltic Sea.

Questions about whether Congress will agree to "backfill" \$3.6 billion the Trump administration took from the Pentagon budget under emergency authorities for

border barrier construction have been deferred to appropriators still negotiating a budget deal.

The bill expresses a "sense of Congress" that supports the people of Hong Kong in defending their rights and autonomy against China. It would authorize another \$4.5 billion to continue long-running U.S. efforts to build up Afghanistan's national security forces in their fight against the Taliban, even though U.S. officials described that effort in confidential government interviews released this week by The Washington Post as a long-running calamity.

The legislation also would give the secretary of defense the power to pay personal injury or death claims by service members owing to medical malpractice at military facilities — but stops short of repealing a judicial precedent known as the Peres doctrine that has long prevented active-duty personnel injured during military service from suing the government.

Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, rejected criticism from within his own party that the Democrats gave up too much during the negotiations

and noted that the bill brings paid family leave to millions of federal workers and repeals the "widow's tax," two measures he said Republicans fought during the talks. He called the legislation the "most progressive defense bill we have passed in decades."

Still, Democratic lawmakers had included many provisions in the House version of the bill that didn't make it into the compromise legislation.

Among them were Democratic initiatives to overturn restrictions on transgender troops serving in the military, prohibit the deployment of new low-yield nuclear weapons, restrict Trump from waging war against Iran without congressional sign-off, and end the Pentagon's backing for Saudi Arabia's war against Houthi rebels in Yemen.

Some lawmakers also had hoped to see more extensive requirements for the Pentagon to deal with polyfluoroalkyl, or PFAS, contamination of groundwater and drinking water on military installations. The bill would phase out the use of PFAS, a group of man-made chemicals, in firefighting foams. The Pentagon is still conducting a health impact study on the chemicals.



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MILITARY

DOD watchdog probes contract for border wall

By COLLEEN LONG
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department's internal watchdog is investigating a \$400 million border wall contract awarded to a firm that used multiple appearances on Fox News to push for the job.

The Pentagon's inspector general sent a letter Thursday to House Homeland Committee Chairman Bennie Thompson telling him the contract awarded to North Dakota-based firm Fisher Sand and Gravel Co. would be audited. Thompson, D-Miss., asked for the review last week, in part over concerns the proposals did not meet operational requirements and prototypes came in late and over budget.

Tommy Fisher, the head of the family business, said Thursday there would be "nothing to find" in an audit.

"We were told we were the lowest price and the best value," he said. "We look forward to working with the Army Corps of Engineers."

The border wall is one of President Donald Trump's top priorities. He campaigned on a promise to build a "big beautiful wall" between the U.S. and Mexico, said Mexico would pay for it, and promised to build 450 to 500 miles by the end of 2020. Mexico is not paying for the wall and, as of Nov. 1, Trump had built 78 miles.

Trump's effort to push through funding, using money from the Pentagon after Congress refused to fund the wall, has been met with resistance and lawsuits. A federal judge this week blocked the administration from spending some Defense Department money on the barrier.

The company was awarded a contract Dec. 2 to build 31 miles of wall in Arizona, part of a series of contracts to push out increased

mileage. Fisher had made a number of appearances on Trump's favorite cable news channel — Fox News — talking about his desire to win a contract. His firm, though, has little experience with such construction and a previous proposal was rejected.

Fisher said his company could do the work for \$13 million a mile. He said the next closest bid was \$20 million a mile.

A letter from the Army Corps when Fisher was awarded the contract said the company's proposal was both technically acceptable and the best priced.

Two administration officials familiar with the matter told The Associated Press this year that Trump aggressively pushed the Fisher firm's bid with the heads of Homeland Security and the Army Corps of Engineers, which manages wall contracts. The interference in federal contracting by a president concerned some overseeing the process but, the officials said, Trump insisted Fisher could get the wall up faster and cheaper than other bidders.

Thompson had said one of his concerns was that officials from Homeland Security, the department managing border security, had toured a private barrier built by the company shortly before the contract was awarded.

The Pentagon watchdog said it was assessing how to complete the audit and would formally announce it soon.

Thompson said he was pleased. "The company had never been awarded a construction contract before and their wall prototype was late and over budget," he said in a statement. "Given the President's multiple endorsements of this company and the amount of taxpayer money at stake, I remain concerned about the possibility of inappropriate influence on the Army Corps' contracting decision."



PHOTOS BY IMMANUEL JOHNSON/Stars and Stripes

Major Jason Byers, the chaplain with the 41st Field Artillery Brigade, carries his son, Lincoln, to the end of a march at Grafenwoehr, Germany, on Thursday.

US soldiers, Santa collect gifts for kids after march at Grafenwoehr

By IMMANUEL JOHNSON
Stars and Stripes

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — American soldiers marched 3 miles from the drop zone at Grafenwoehr Training Area to Tower Barracks on Thursday carrying assault packs filled with toys to be delivered to local children in need.

"This is about giving back to the kids and community, and building those bonds with the surrounding areas," said Staff Sgt. Peyton Baker, a target acquisition platoon sergeant with the 4th Battalion, 319th Field Artillery Regiment, who was dressed up as Santa Claus.

American children who also took part in the march received goodie bags containing candy and small toys. Some 600 additional toys, backpacks and school supplies that were collected were wrapped up and will be distributed to children at the Haus St. Elisabeth children's home in Windscheschenbach and to American military families who are financially strapped over the holidays.



Soldiers march in a toy delivery event at Grafenwoehr. The soldiers will provide toys to children living at Haus St. Elisabeth in Windscheschenbach, Germany.

This is the first year the regiment has distributed toys to local children.

"It's a small way to ... be good neighbors," said Capt. Mike Kayle, chaplain for the regiment. German paratroopers who at-

tended the event were supposed to parachute from CH-47 Chinook helicopters to deliver the gifts, but inclement weather caused the jump to be canceled.

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Smoke billows from the Admiral Kuznetsov carrier during a fire in Murmansk, Russia, on Thursday.

Fire hits Russia's only aircraft carrier

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russia's only aircraft carrier suffered a massive fire Thursday that killed one crew member, injured another 11 people and significantly damaged the ill-fated ship that has been haunted by incidents throughout its service.

The fire on the Admiral Kuznetsov broke out during welding work at a shipyard in the Arctic port of Murmansk and spread quickly through the carrier's internal compartments. The ship's crew and emergency teams spent the day battling the blaze. The Defense Ministry said the fire was localized.

The military said one crew member died while battling the fire and another one is missing. Authorities in Murmansk said 11 people were injured and

10 of them were hospitalized in intensive care.

The Admiral Kuznetsov has been plagued by breakdowns and setbacks since its launch in 1985.

In October 2018, a 70-ton crane crashed onto its deck when a mammoth floating dock holding the ship sank. The crane left a 215-square-foot hole, and the loss of the dock significantly slowed repairs on the carrier since the navy lacked another of comparable size.

Thursday's fire will delay work to fit the ship with modern control systems and new weapons.

With its turbines belching black smoke, the Admiral Kuznetsov looks outdated compared with the nuclear-powered carriers of the United States. However, the Kremlin has used it to project military might far from Russia's shores.

MILITARY

Troxell leaves GIs with call to know all conflict arenas

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

America's future enlisted leaders will need to couple the ability to bring violence to bear on the country's enemies with a range of new skills, such as diplomacy and countering disinformation campaigns, the Pentagon's outgoing top enlisted adviser said.

The forces of the future will have to maintain a "shoot 'em in the face, beat 'em to death with an entrenching tool attitude," Command Sgt. Maj. John Wayne Troxell said in a wide-ranging interview with Stars and Stripes earlier this year. "But we also have to be savvy enough to understand all-domain conflict, especially when it comes to cyber, information operations and things like that."

The third senior enlisted adviser to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Troxell retires Friday after nearly 38 years in the Army, including four years advising the chairman and the defense secretary on issues that affect the enlisted force.

His comments echo remarks he made in Iraq and Afghanistan two years ago during a USO tour, in which he said Islamic State faced the choice to surrender or die — by bomb, gunshot or bludgeoning with an e-tool, a type of shovel. The comments circulated widely and he's since signed hundreds of e-tools sent to him by fans of his statement.

Troxell sat down with Stars and Stripes during a conference in Germany organized by his successor, U.S. Africa Command senior enlisted leader Chief Master Sgt. Ramon Colon-Lopez, which focused on enlisted professional development among U.S. partner militaries in Africa.

Troxell believes future enlisted leaders will need to focus on maintaining low-tech capabilities

while embracing new technologies, allowing them to compete with "great power" adversaries like Russia and China around the globe and in the cyber and space domains.

In addition to bringing more technological know-how, non-commissioned officers also will be expected to do more of what looks like diplomacy in leading and influencing foreign partners, Troxell said.

There's also a current need for NCOs to better police their own, he said. He cautioned against taking personal beefs with peers to a third-party to "weaponize" them, and instead called for dealing with such issues person-to-person.

Good conduct and leadership produce enlisted personnel who thrive, he said, citing his own experience of 14 years in the 82nd Airborne Division as contributing to his success.

"Culture is driven by leadership," he said. "How the leaders act and how the leaders perform, the culture will adjust to how the leaders are doing."

During Troxell's tenure as SEAC, he traveled to nearly 60 countries, often advising his counterparts or gathering information to advocate on behalf of U.S. enlisted troops.

"How do you follow a guy like this with all the accomplishments he had over the past four years?" Colon-Lopez, his successor, asked Pentagon reporters Monday. "The answer is pretty simple: We can never do enough for our troops compared to what they do for us."

A career special operations airman, who earned a Bronze Star with combat "V" for valor and the Air Force Combat Action Medal for actions in Afghanistan, Colon-Lopez will be the first airman to hold the position.

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IMMANUEL JOHNSON/Stars and Stripes

Sgt. 1st Class Rocky Johnson, left, communicates with a command center before the 2nd Cavalry Regiment conducts a live-fire exercise in Vilseck, Germany, on Thursday.

2nd Cavalry's Bulldog Battery learns how to fire, then avoid being tracked

By IMMANUEL JOHNSON
Stars and Stripes

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — The blasts of howitzers rang across the snow-covered landscape of Vilseck as soldiers from the 2nd Cavalry Regiment's Bulldog Battery learned how to fire and move during a qualification exercise Thursday.

"We try to make this as real as possible for them," said Sgt. 1st

Class James Deese, a digital master gunner with the 2nd Cavalry.

Soldiers need to be aware of how many rounds they fire, with the assumption that they're being tracked by the enemy, Deese said.

"The more we shoot, the more they can pinpoint where we are," Deese said. "Once six rounds are fired, the radar knows where we are — we move the platoon after that."

The basic qualification allows platoons to continue on to advanced training, said 1st Lt. Jack Baisley, a squadron adjutant with the Field Artillery Squadron.

With temperatures below freezing, the exercise also gave the soldiers, some of whom will deploy to Poland at the end of January, a feel for the weather expected there.

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DANIELLE O'DONNELL/U.S. Army

Command Sgt. Maj. John Wayne Troxell, senior enlisted adviser to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, shows the memento presented to him during his last visit to the NCO Leadership Center of Excellence in El Paso, Texas, last month. Troxell retires Friday.

VETERANS

Unaccountable: US still pursuing cases of more than 1,100 MIA from Vietnam War

The toughest cases

Clifford Van Artsdalen represents one of the toughest types of cases to resolve in the search for the still-missing 1,600 soldiers, Marines, airmen and sailors from the Vietnam War: ground-loss cases.

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, the body now overseeing the U.S. government's effort to repatriate the country's missing troops, is still actively pursuing the cases of 1,102 service members missing from the Vietnam War.

Van Artsdalen is one of the 257 lost infantrymen and Marines not associated with large metal objects such as helicopters and airplanes. The enemy often stripped the American dead bare of even their metal dog tags before a hasty burial.

Progress in retrieving these ground losses has been achingly slow, with the DPAA identifying only seven such cases since the beginning of 2015. At such a rate, it would take almost two centuries to recover them.

Many of the remains rest in the harsh, acidic jungle soil of Southeast Asia, dissolving over the half-century since the U.S. ended combat operations there in 1973.

"Time is not our ally," Rear Adm. Jon Kreitz, then DPAA deputy director, said in June at the annual conference of the National League of POW/MIA Families. "One of the biggest reasons when it comes to the Vietnam War is because remains are degrading at a very fast rate. It makes identifying individuals from their remains more challenging all the time."

McDonald-Low's efforts on the Van Artsdalen case illustrate many of the obstacles that have stood — indeed, still stand — in the way of DPAA recovering ground troops still missing in action, or MIA.

For the past decade, the decorated Vietnam War veteran has shepherded Van Artsdalen's case through the government bureaucracy, tracked down and interviewed eyewitness veterans, dug up official after-action reports and pushed back on erroneous assumptions and information held within the official case file.

"The grim reality is that there's no sense of urgency or priority at DPAA to recover the remaining unaccounted-for soldiers of the Vietnam War, although they are keenly aware that the window for their recovery is rapidly closing," said McDonald-Low, who lives in Portland, Ore.

The DPAA said in a written response to Stars and Stripes that the Vietnam War missing are its "primary operational priority" and that it is increasing the pace and scope of operations, spending, for example, more than \$50 million in the last two years in investigative and excavation missions in Southeast Asia.

The boyish-faced grenadier

First Lt. Michael McDonald-Low arrived by ship to Vietnam for his first combat tour in December 1967 after graduating two years earlier from Officer Candidate School in Fort Knox, Ky., and then training in Hawaii.

Within a couple of months, his company was patrolling South Vietnam's countryside on search and destroy missions for 10 to 12 days at a time, he said.

Among the men in his platoon was Clifford Van Artsdalen, an 18-year-old boyish-faced grenadier who stood barely 5 feet tall.

Growing up, "Cliffy" had a passion for baseball, said Garth Garges, a boyhood friend, now 70, who still lives in the tiny town of Perkasio, Pa., where they both grew up. During summers in their early teens, the pair played sandlot baseball almost every day, he said.

"He didn't have a mean bone in his body," Garges said. "He always had some funny little quip."

He lost track of him after Van Artsdalen dropped out of high school during the 11th grade. The two had talked frequently about Vietnam War, and neither had any desire to go fight it, Garges said.

But Van Artsdalen found himself in the thick of it as an infantryman in Vietnam, where danger and death lurked everywhere, from sprained ankles, jungle rot and diseases to firefights big and small with the enemy.

He was among hundreds of soldiers killed or wounded in Que Son Valley, about 30 miles southwest of Danang, in the early part of May 1968, when the North Vietnamese Army launched attacks marking the start of their second Tet Offensive.

On May 5, McDonald-Low's Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, 11th Light Infantry Brigade was choppered into a valley below Landing Zone Center, a hilltop U.S. firebase. Together with Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry, 198th Light Infantry Brigade, the soldiers swept through the nearby hillsides where two U.S. helicopters had been shot down.

McDonald-Low led his men on assaults over five days on the top of Hill 352, a North Vietnamese Army stronghold, each time being driven back, each time dragging the dead and wounded down the slope to



Gary Sanner

Spec. Clifford Van Artsdalen, left, plays cards with his fellow platoon members on May 5, 1968, as they await a helicopter shuttle to Hill 352 on Nui Hoac Ridge, South Vietnam. Van Artsdalen was killed in an ambush six days later, and his body was never recovered.



ANDREA VILLARI/Stars and Stripes

Capt. Michael McDonald-Low poses in December 1968 after completing his combat tours in Vietnam. Spec. Clifford Van Artsdalen was one of the men in McDonald-Low's platoon.

Michael McDonald-Low

where they could be treated or evacuated.

After days of intense battle, Delta Company was badly depleted of men and rest, and on May 11 they were ordered to leave Hill 352 and make haste to Landing Zone Center for refitting and replenishment.

McDonald-Low was tasked with leading the company from Hill 352 across the valley and up the roughly 1,200 feet to LZ Center.

When McDonald-Low reached a split in the trail on a nearby summit, with one path leading up to LZ Center, the other heading down into the next valley, he sent Van Artsdalen and two other men up trail 30 yards and three men down trail the same distance to secure each location.

It was the simple kind of command he'd given countless times in recent months, but the moment was locked in his memory.

"Some guys just stick out in your mind," McDonald-Low said of the many men who died under his command. "I remember looking at Van Artsdalen and sending him up that trail. I'll never forget it."

Van Artsdalen and two other soldiers were ambushed and killed moments later.

The date of Van Artsdalen's death remains seared into McDonald-Low's memory because that same day, May 11, 1968, he was wounded in the head, right shoulder and arm and evacuated for weeks of hospital recovery.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

VETERANS

FROM PAGE 8

Two months later he returned to the battlefield as a newly minted captain in command of Delta Company.

Leaving Vietnam behind

McDonald-Low left the Army when his four-year stint was up in July 1969, taking with him a Combat Infantryman's Badge, Bronze Star with "V" device for valor, Bronze Star for Meritorious Service and Purple Heart with two Oak Leaf Clusters.

"I left Vietnam behind me," he said. "I put it in the back of my mind for many, many years. Never admitted I was a Vietnam vet."

He said he never forgot the bedlam, uncertainty and loss he experienced in infantry combat; it flooded upward through nightmares and mood swings.

An extreme-sports enthusiast, he made a career out of writing and publishing magazines on windsurfing, snowboarding and wakeboarding as he raised a family.

When he retired in early 2009, he began for the first time reflecting in depth about the Vietnam War experiences he had pushed into a dark corner. He found the website for his old unit, the 11th Light Infantry Brigade, which listed those in the unit who died in action.

He was stunned when he reached the entry about Van Artsdalen. He was listed as missing in action, body never recovered.

He had no idea that one of his soldiers remained unfound in Vietnam.

The website listed Van Artsdalen's death on the wrong date — two days before McDonald-Low had looked the soldier in the eye and sent him up the trail — and in the wrong location.

He said he was agast to learn that the Hawaii-based Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, or JPAC, was using the same flawed data — even sending search teams several times to the wrong location in Vietnam.

The information JPAC and its sister agency, the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office on the East Coast, had on Van Artsdalen's death was largely based on statements made by Capt. Charles Seketa, Delta's company commander, during a board of inquiry May 20, 1968 — nine days after the deadly battle near Landing Zone Center.

After discovering Van Artsdalen was still missing, McDonald-Low tracked down Seketa and met with him in the summer of 2009, about six months before he died.

"He was very cordial, and we sat down with a map," McDonald-Low said. "But Chuck couldn't read a map if his life depended on it. He admitted to me, 'You know, you couldn't really rely on me for those kinds of things.'"

"In the heat of inquiry, all he was trying to do was put names to dates, nine days after he'd lost some 45 men," McDonald-Low said. "For a company commander to do that even with as few men as we had left would be very difficult to do under the best of circumstances."

In June 2010, McDonald-Low



Above: A member of a Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command field mission searches on March 9, 2012, for evidence of the remains of Army Spc. Clifford Van Artsdalen, who was killed on the spot in Vietnam on May 11, 1968. Right: On the same date decades later, Michael McDonald-Low leads a JPAC team up the same trail in Vietnam that he had led soldiers up 44 years earlier.

Defense Department photos

provided JPAC with a map showing the exact location where Van Artsdalen died.

Three months later he received an email from a JPAC analyst telling him that Seketa's information "is obviously incorrect," and invited McDonald-Low to head the next investigative field team to the location just below LZ Center.

Under JPAC protocol, no excavation was done during that investigatory field mission in March 2012.

McDonald-Low said the mission's forensic anthropologist, Elliot Moore, indicated that the most likely spot the North Vietnamese would have buried Van Artsdalen was in a nearby small gully covered with dense overbrush and

that there was a 10-year window to retrieve bones before the acidic soil dissolved them.

"Research has shown that remains can be lost within 10 years in very acidic soils," Moore, who retired from JPAC in 2015, told Stars and Stripes in an email. In less acidic soils they may last "up to 40 years plus," he said.

'Fog of war'

Two years after standing on that Vietnamese trail with Moore, McDonald-Low had grown frustrated that no excavation mission had gone to the site.

In May 2014, he was contacted by Alisa Stack, a senior Defense Department civilian heading the Personnel Accounting Consolidation Task Force, or PACT, which had been formed by Defense Department Secretary Chuck Hagel to oversee the overhaul of the department's accounting after a series of scandals. She invited McDonald-Low's feedback on the agency's performance.

In an email, he complained about the slow progress in finding his soldier, whom JPAC had officially designated MIA 1165.

"The reason I have been given [for the delay] is that JPAC needs confirmation by a Vietnamese villager or a former soldier who remembers the date and location of 1165's loss," he wrote. "This is in my opinion an unreasonable burden of proof being demanded.



lost in that same area is virtually zero."

DPAA spokesman Lt. Col. Kenneth Hoffman, in a written response to a query by Stars and Stripes, said the agency routinely takes U.S. and foreign veterans and civilians back to battlefields to help locate burial sites.

"Many of these individuals, to include Mr. McDonald-Low, were not able to confirm precise locations based on their recollection of events that occurred decades ago in the fog of war," Hoffman said. "Mr. McDonald-Low was able to point out the general area where he last saw SP4 Van Artsdalen but could provide no information on where he was killed or buried."

McDonald-Low dismisses that characterization.

"I wasn't in a fog of war," he said. "I knew the exact map coordinates. I provided precise information on where he was killed."

Illogical conclusions

Stack invited McDonald-Low to become a member of the PACT task force, and he was sent to Hawaii for a week to assess JPAC's operations and procedures.

It was during these interviews that the chasm between JPAC in Hawaii and DPMO on the East Coast became clear: "There was not just miscommunication, but also a self-serving willingness to guard information — an unwillingness to share, which was affecting their ability to work as a team and accomplish the mission," he said.

"In 1968 there were few villagers who dared travel near LZ Center in the remote, mountainous, hostile area of the Que Son Valley where 1165 was killed. The chance of any villager being alive after 44 years, let alone remembering a single U.S. soldier killed there when there were hundreds



Read our series of features that add context and understanding to the history of the Vietnam War

stripes.com/vietnam50

VETERANS

Unaccountable: Vietnam vet feels frustration, sense of urgency

FROM PAGE 9

In his final report, McDonald-Low wrote that burden-of-proof protocols for infantry ground-loss cases, like Van Artsdalen's, should be changed to improve the chances for success in these "toughest remaining cases."

A few months later, in August 2014, McDonald-Low was appointed as the first-ever Southeast Asia veteran liaison for JPAC/DPMO. He underwent a background security check, was issued an official Defense Department ID card and worked as an unpaid contractor reviewing unresolved ground-loss cases.

As he worked the cases, it became clear to him that too many JPAC investigators were unfamiliar with basic Vietnam War-era infantry combat tactics and weapons, as well as the types of wounds and damage they could inflict, he said.

"In one case, an investigator said a soldier had an 81-mm mortar land at his feet, and his body was vaporized," he said. "Hence, there was no further remains we could identify and recover, as had been reported by the soldiers on the ground."

"It's impossible for a human being to be disintegrated by that mortar size," he said.

He saw that ignorance surface in Van Artsdalen's case, which happened in early 2015. In it, a JPAC analyst speculated on the possibility Van Artsdalen "was wounded and perhaps left in the immediate vicinity of the battle."

That notion entirely ignored after-action reports McDonald-Low had delivered to JPAC. Those reports detail a search for the bodies up the trail about three hours after the initial fire-fight. They recovered the bodies of two but could not recover the third body they saw, Van Artsdalen, because of subsequent heavy enemy fire.

"For the JPAC case analyst to imply that 1165 lay at that location for three hours until [Alpha Company] arrived and then [he] departed after their firefight is illogical," he wrote.

Waning casework

By the end of 2016, he said the flow of cases from the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency had dried to a trickle.

His numerous inquiries about cases he had worked on and requests for new cases went unanswered.

As someone who speaks his mind, he is cognizant he may have rubbed somebody the wrong way.

"Certainly I'm an abrasive personality," he said. If he judged something in an analyst's report to be "ridiculous," he did not hesitate to point it out, he said.

But he also suspects he might have ruffled feathers with a book he self-published in 2016, titled "Unaccounted," which chronicled the battle that led to Van Artsdalen's death and the mission McDonald-Low led in Vietnam in 2014.

"I wrote it for 1165 and myself,"



Gary Samner

First Lt. Michael McDonald-Low awaits the arrival of a helicopter on May 5, 1968, to take him and other soldiers to Hill 352, Nui Hoac Ridge, South Vietnam. More than 50 years after one of his soldiers was killed in the Que Son Valley, McDonald-Low is still fighting frustration and Father Time in an effort to locate that soldier's remains.

he said of the book, which depicted the government accounting effort in a generally positive light. "I wanted to memorialize his service, his loss and my experience going through it."

To this day, he does not know why the casework ended.

"I only had one goal, which was to be honest and give them my opinion based on my knowledge and experience," he said. "I had no ax to grind. I just wanted to see the mission fulfilled, streamlined and improved."

His official credentials giving him access to certain DPAA databases ended in November 2017. The lapse left him ever more removed from the Van Artsdalen case.

Frustrated, he wrote a lengthy letter in early 2018 to President Donald Trump, which he copied and distributed to veterans' groups and members of the media. In it, he highlighted the shortcomings in the DPAA's procedures for locating and excavating remains for ground-loss cases such as Van Artsdalen.

Months later, in September 2018, he finally received a letter from DPAA Director Kelly McKeague, who wrote that he was responding on behalf of the president.

McDonald-Low was familiar with the director because McKeague's professional involvement with the MIA accounting effort mirrored his own.

As an Air Force major general, McKeague took command of JPAC at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, in 2012. The same year McDonald-Low led the

mission to Vietnam. McKeague became DPAA's first deputy director when it was created in 2015. He became its director in 2017 after retiring from active duty.

'With rigor and urgency'

McKeague touted DPAA's new review and evaluation processes — which now includes writing an overall case narrative — as a means of speeding approvals of investigation and excavation field missions.

He concluded, "The pledge that I make to families of the missing and veterans whose comrades-in-arms are unaccounted-for is that DPAA will diligently and dutifully pursue this noble humanitarian effort, and sacred obligation, with rigor and urgency, employing best practices as well as embracing new methodologies."

While the letter addressed some of McDonald-Low's general concerns about DPAA, it did nothing to advance Van Artsdalen's case. Although sidelined from official access to DPAA databases, McDonald-Low continued to work the case on his own.

In October 2018, he tracked down and interviewed a radio operator who was among a group of soldiers from Alpha Company, 1-6 Infantry, sent out on May 16, 1968, to recover the body of a different soldier left on the trail leading to Landing Zone Center. That was five days after Van Artsdalen was killed.

His recollections provided clarification over reports by researchers that had confused sightings of the body of another soldier as

being that of Van Artsdalen.

Confident that the new statement would move the case forward, McDonald-Low submitted an updated report to the DPAA in November 2018. In the following months he queried the agency about the status of the updated report with the radio operator's information but received no reply.

The radio operator died Feb. 2, 2019. No DPAA interview was ever done.

"So the man who gave me this new information dies before DPAA even bothers to interview him and verify what I put in that report," he said. "They dragged their feet."

Still lost

With a heightened sense of urgency in the wake of the death, McDonald-Low wrote to the DPAA a few days later requesting to review Van Artsdalen's case narrative, if one had been written.

About two weeks later, he received a reply from Navy Cmdr. Jason Menarchik, chief of a sub-regional team at the DPAA's Hawaii lab, which said the agency was conducting an "in-depth review of your report."

"To clarify," concluded the short email sent Feb. 27, "since you are not the Primary Next of Kin for SP4 Van Artsdalen, nor have on-record any authorization, we cannot provide sensitive details on this particular case, such as the Case Narrative, that you requested at this time."

McDonald-Low said he still seethes over the denial.

He had spent the last decade

collecting official after-action reports and tracking down veterans with eyewitness accounts. He led an accounting agency mission to Vietnam in 2012 to verify the exact location where Van Artsdalen had died — after JPAC had sent missions to Vietnam numerous times to the wrong place, costing hundreds of thousands of dollars.

To be so casually dismissed from the case he'd built and shepherded — in the death of a soldier he led and fought beside — epitomizes all he finds self-defeating within the Defense Department's MIA accounting effort.

"The bottom line is that Van Artsdalen represents every other poor, forgotten soul — particularly infantrymen and Marines — still lost from the war," he said.

McDonald-Low's entreaties to DPAA officials, including McKeague, have gone unanswered.

A request by Stars and Stripes to interview McKeague was not granted.

McDonald-Low talks often about the letter McKeague sent him a year ago — and the vow he made in it to pursue cases with "rigor and urgency."

"I am still waiting to see Director McKeague's promises fulfilled for the many MIAs remaining unaccounted," McDonald-Low said. "I am deeply worried about when the last Vietnam veteran dies — the last man to see a fellow soldier alive, a man like me who gave him an order to go up that trail — who will be left to carry on the mission?"

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NATION

Judiciary: Clashes between Republicans, Democrats mark Trump impeachment hearing

FROM FRONT PAGE

"Very sad," Trump tweeted. As the hearing began, lawmakers dug in for the second day of the Judiciary session, only the fourth time in U.S. history a president is facing impeachment, to consider the two articles brought by Democrats. They charge Trump with abuse of power for asking Ukraine to investigate Joe Biden while withholding aid as leverage and with obstruction of Congress for stonewalling the House's investigation.

Chairman Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., immediately asked for a full reading of the nine-page resolution, airing the two articles of impeachment against the president for the live TV cameras. It was expected to be a long day of fights over amendments, primarily by Republicans trying to stop the impeachment. They were likely to be rejected by Democrats along party lines.

The top Republican, Rep. Doug Collins, of Georgia, called the proceedings a "farce" and said they should be halted until his side was provided a chance for an oral hearing. The request was denied, with the chairman saying the process was in line with the impeachment hearings of Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton.

First up was an amendment from GOP Rep. Jim Jordan, of Ohio, who tried to force the first charge against Trump. "This amendment strikes article 1 because article 1 ignores the truth," he declared.

Rep. David Cicilline, D-R.I.,

argued there was "overwhelming evidence" that the president, in pushing Ukraine to investigate rival Biden, was engaged in an abuse of power "to corrupt American elections."

Debate on that one amendment lasted for hours with no vote yet called.

Thursday's hearing picked up where Wednesday's late night session left off.

Into the night, Democrats and Republicans delivered sharp, poignant and, at times, personal arguments for and against impeachment. Both sides appealed to Americans' sense of history. Democrats describing a strong sense of duty to stop what one called the president's "constitutional crime spree" and Republicans decrying the "hot garbage" impeachment and what it means for the future of the country.

Cicilline asked Republicans standing with Trump to "wake up" and honor their oath of office. Republican Rep. Mike Johnson, of Louisiana, responded with his own request to "put your country over party." Rep. Lou Correa, D-Calif., shared his views in English and Spanish.

One Democrat, Rep. Val Demings, of Florida, told the panel that, as a descendant of slaves and now a member of Congress, she has faith in America because it is the "government of the people" and in this country "nobody is above the law." Freshman Democratic Rep. Lucy McBath, of Georgia, emotionally talked about losing her son to gun violence and said



MATT MCCLAIN, POOL/AP

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerry Nadler, D-N.Y., speaks during a committee markup of the articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump on Capitol Hill on Thursday.

that while impeachment was not why she came to Washington, she wants to "fight for an America that my son Jordan would be proud of."

But Rep. Jordan insisted Democrats were impeaching because "they don't like us," and he read out a long list claiming Trump's accomplishments.

For all the debate, the articles weren't likely to be changed. Democrats were unlikely to accept any amendments proposed by Republicans unified against Trump's impeachment.

Democrats are also unified. They have agreed to the articles' language, which says that Trump acted "corruptly" and "betrayed the nation." Hamstringing in the minority, Republicans wouldn't have the votes to make changes without support from at least some Democrats.

Nadler said the committee

should consider whether the evidence shows that Trump committed the acts he's accused of, whether they rise to the level of impeachable high crimes and misdemeanors and what the consequences will be if Congress fails to act.

"When his time has passed, when his grip on our politics is gone, when our country returns, as surely it will, to calmer times and stronger leadership, history will look back on our actions here today," Nadler said. "How would you be remembered?"

Republicans are also messaging to the American people — and to Trump himself — as they argue that the articles show Democrats are out to get the president. Most Republicans contend, as Trump does, that he has done nothing wrong, and all of them are expected to vote against the articles.

Collins argued that Democrats are impeaching the president because they think they can't beat him in the 2020 election.

"That's the wrong reason to impeach somebody, and the American people are seeing through this," Collins said. "But at the end of the day, my heart breaks for a committee that has trashed this institution."

The House is expected to vote on the articles next week, in the days before Christmas. That would send them to the Senate for a 2020 trial.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said Tuesday that he would be "totally surprised" if there were the necessary 67 votes in the chamber to convict Trump, and signaled options for a swift trial. He said no decision had been made about whether to call witnesses.

Pelosi drug bill reflects Trump idea but he isn't on board

BY RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As a White House candidate, Donald Trump said he could save Medicare billions of dollars by negotiating prescription drug prices.

Legislation expected to pass the Democratic-controlled House on Thursday would deliver that and much more.

But Trump's not on board, the White House is threatening a veto. Republicans who run the Senate say they will ignore the bill by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., because they say the government shouldn't negotiate drug prices.

That's not stopping Democrats from savoring the moment. They contend Trump's disapproval shows a lack of conviction behind some of his populist pitches.

They're also betting that Pelosi's plan will prove popular with 2020 voters, helping elect Democrats who will eventually be in a position to pass something like it.

The bill would cap drug copays and deductibles at \$2,000 a year for Medicare recipients. It would

"We were sent to Washington with a mandate to bring down the cost of prescription drugs."

Rep. Haley Stevens
D-Mich.

use about \$360 billion of its projected 10-year savings from lower drug costs to create Medicare coverage for dental care, hearing and vision, filling major gaps for seniors.

"We were sent to Washington with a mandate to bring down the cost of prescription drugs and to deliver for the American people — this will untie the hands of the federal government to negotiate prices," said Rep. Haley Stevens, D-Mich., as debate got underway. She is a member of the freshman class that enabled Democrats to regain control of the House in 2018.

White House officials say Pelosi's bill is unworkable and that Trump wants something that can pass now. Near unanimous opposition from congressional Repu-

licans means it would never clear the Senate.

Republican lawmakers predict Pelosi's bill would stifle innovation and they urged House Democrats to seek a bipartisan compromise.

Drugs that save lives will not be around," said Rep. Greg Walden, R-Ore. "Innovation goes on the rocks; lives will be lost."

A major concern about the legislation is that it will result in fewer drugs coming to market. But there's debate about the extent. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates about 3% to 10% fewer new drugs, while the White House Council of Economic Advisers says it could be much higher, up to one-third of new medications.

Rep. Bobby Scott, D-Va., who

helped write the Pelosi bill, said Republicans predicting the drug pipeline will dry up are using scare tactics.

"Any drug that's out there, we're going to have access to," he said. "The U.S. would still be the biggest market."

The pharmaceutical industry is strongly opposed to the bill. Among the groups backing it is AARP.

High prescription drug prices consistently register in polls as the public's top health care concern. But it's unclear in a capital divided over Trump's impeachment that any major legislation will pass before next year's elections.

There's a bipartisan Senate bill that would also cap seniors' out-of-pocket costs at \$3,100 a year and require drugmakers to pay Medicare rebates if companies raise prices above inflation. The plan has Trump's support but Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., hasn't said if or when he'll bring it to the floor.

Inflation rebates are included in Pelosi's bill as well, so there's considerable overlap between the

two major pieces of legislation before lawmakers. But Pelosi's measure goes farther with several unique features, including:

- Medicare would be authorized to negotiate prices for costly medications, using a formula based on lower prices paid in other economically advanced countries.

- Drugmakers who refuse to negotiate would be hit with steep sales taxes for the medication at issue. Republicans say proposed taxes as high as 95% are unconstitutional. The budget office projects that most pharmaceutical companies would opt to accept lower prices from Medicare.

- Private health insurance plans would be able to receive Medicare's discounted prices.

- Congressional budget experts estimate the price negotiations provisions of Pelosi's bill would save \$456 billion over 10 years. After subtracting for new Medicare dental, hearing and vision coverage, that still leaves money to increase spending on medical research, community health centers and countering the opioid epidemic.

NATION

2 killers in NJ attack tied to fringe group

By MICHAEL R. SISAK
AND DAVID PORTER
Associated Press

JERSEY CITY, N.J. — The two killers who stormed a kosher market in Jersey City had apparently been followers of the Black Hebrew Israelites — a fringe group whose members have been known to rail against white people and Jews — and one of them had made anti-Semitic posts online, according to a law enforcement official briefed on the investigation.

The findings stoked suspicions that the rampage Tuesday that left the killers and four victims dead was not a random crime but an anti-Semitic attack, even as state and federal authorities cautioned that the motive was still under investigation.

The FBI on Wednesday searched the Harlem headquarters of the Israelite Church of God in Jesus Christ, which is the formal name of the Black Hebrew group, according to the official, who was not authorized to discuss the case publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

"The why and the ideology and the motivation — that's what we're



Workers on Thursday replace a window that was broken by gunfire at the Sacred Heart school during a gunbattle in Jersey City, N.J.

investigating," New Jersey Attorney General Grewal said Wednesday, adding that authorities are trying to determine whether anyone else was involved.

Others, including Jersey City Mayor Steve Fulop, pronounced the bloodshed a hate crime against Jews, with Fulop saying surveillance video made it clear that the attackers targeted the

Jewish market, slowly and deliberately driving up to the grocery in a stolen rental van and immediately opening fire.

The attackers were identified as David N. Anderson, 47, and Francine Graham, 50 — both of them also prime suspects in the slaying of a lively driver found dead in a car trunk in nearby Bayonne over the weekend, Grewal said.



Anderson

into the market. Several weapons were recovered from the store.

The victims killed in the store were Mindel Ferench, 31, who with her husband owned the grocery; Moshe Deutsch, 24, a rabbinical student from Brooklyn who was shopping there; and store employee Douglas Miguel Rodriguez, 49.

Members of New York's ultra-Orthodox Jewish community gathered Wednesday night for funerals for Ferench and Deutsch. Thousands of people, mostly men, followed Ferench's casket through the streets of Brooklyn, hugging and crying.

The bloodshed in the city of 270,000 people across the Hudson River from New York City began at a graveyard, where Detective Joseph Seals, a 40-year-old mem-

ber of a unit devoted to taking illegal weapons off the street, was gunned down by the assailants, authorities said. They then drove the van about a mile to the kosher market.

The drawn-out gunbattle with police filled the streets with the sound of high-powered rifle fire as SWAT officers in full tactical gear swarmed the neighborhood. During the shootout, police used an armored vehicle to ram the store entrance.

The prospect of attacks against Jews weighed heavily on the more than 300 people who attended a vigil Wednesday night at a synagogue about a mile from where the shootings took place.

In the deadliest attack on Jews in U.S. history, 11 people were killed in an October 2018 shooting at a synagogue in Pittsburgh. Last April, a gunman opened fire at a synagogue near San Diego, killing a woman and wounding a rabbi and two others.

The kosher grocery is a central fixture in a growing community of Orthodox Jews who have been moving to Jersey City in recent years and settling in what was a mostly black section of Jersey City, causing some resentment.

Deceased Korean War vet awarded accrued VA benefits

By KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — Thomas Nielson joined the Air Force when he was 17 and was promptly deployed to South Korea where the war against the communist-backed North was just getting underway. He served on the peninsula in 1950-54.

However, Nielson's real fight began after he returned home and filed for military medical benefits for health problems that he believed stemmed from severe dental issues and malnutrition during his service.

Five years after he died in 2014 at age 81, his family finally received more than \$720,000 in retroactive benefits after the Department of Veterans Affairs ruled in his favor.

His lawyer, Eric Gang, expressed frustration that Nielson didn't receive the money before he died, but said the family is "very, very grateful" because it can allow it to care for Nielson's widow, who has Alzheimer's disease and is in a nursing home.

"It's costing a lot of money to keep her in the nursing home," he told Stars and Stripes by telephone Wednesday.

Nielson was awarded \$663,000 for 20 years of back pay, and his wife received \$57,000 in widow's benefits.

"It's the largest award I have ever seen," Gang said.

"What a difference it would have made had the VA granted the benefits way back when he first got this process started, and what a difference it would have made to him to have seen the VA grant his claim while he was still alive."

The VA declined to comment on Nielson's case, saying it can't publicly discuss its interactions with individual veterans due to privacy concerns.

But a spokeswoman said the agency has "modernized the process for appealing disability claims to provide more timely and consistent decisions" under the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017.

"In the last fiscal year, VA completed



Nielson

more than 95,000 appeals decisions, a record high," spokeswoman Christina Mandreucci said in an email.

Nielson turned to Gang, whose firm specializes in disability appeals for military veterans, in 2012 after exhausting all administrative appeal remedies at the VA. The earlier claims of malnutrition were denied, but doctors had determined he suffered from an autoimmune disease that began manifesting itself during his service.

Gang was armed with journal entries in which then-Airman 1st Class Nielson complains about not being able to eat and weight loss while in South Korea.

"Boy am I in misery," Nielson wrote in neat, cursive handwriting on Sept. 25, 1952. "I had 6 teeth pulled this morning," he said, adding that he had gone into shock after the dentist pulled four of them without Novocain.

Medical experts hired by Gang also examined Nielson's service records and were able to prove the problems he described were symptoms of an autoimmune disease that hindered his ability to work and support his family.

Nielson died on Oct. 6, 2014, at home

in Tucson, Ariz., but Gang continued his claim by adding Nielson's widow as the substitute claimant.

The Board of Veterans Appeals ruled in Nielson's favor in April 2017, but the check didn't appear.

"We wait. A year goes by. We don't hear anything. Two or three years go by," Gang said. "Total radio silence from the VA."

He finally received a VA official who informed him that the department wasn't going to implement the board's decision because Mrs. Nielson forgot to sign a form in the right place. Gang filed a writ of mandamus in federal appeals court, which compelled the agency to pay.

Gang, who is an outspoken advocate for a massive overhaul of the VA, said he understands why officials dismissed his client's claims about malnutrition, but he believes the agency had a responsibility to help determine the actual cause of his problems.

"But the thing that's most egregious in my opinion is their actions once we had finally been vindicated — to just be vindictive and not want to pay the claim. That's just unacceptable," he said.

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IG: DOD official sexually harassed female staff

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A Pentagon report has found that a senior Defense Department official sexually harassed several women on his staff, touching them and making inappropriate comments.

The department's inspector general said in a report Thursday that Guy Roberts, the former

assistant defense secretary for nuclear programs, made "deliberate, unwelcome physical contact of a sexual nature by hugging, kissing or touching" three female employees and created a hostile work environment.

The complaint was filed in February and Roberts resigned in early April. The report said Rob-

erts' physical interaction with the women caused them to fear that they would be fired if they complained or rejected his behavior.

According to the report, Roberts said it was not his intent to sexually harass the women and that they didn't tell him his behavior was inappropriate.

However, the inspector general

said that at least one of the women told him on several occasions that his behavior was not welcome.

"We concluded that he knew or should have known, based on his experience and training, that the physical contact and sexually suggestive comments were completely inappropriate," the report said.



Joe Gromelski/Stars and Stripes

Then-Assistant Defense Secretary Guy Roberts listens at a Senate hearing in 2017.

NATION

Fewer kids report sex abuse in US detention centers

By REBECCA BOONE
Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho — A new federal study has found the number of kids who say they have been sexually victimized in juvenile detention centers has dropped across the U.S. compared with past years. But remarkably high rates of sexual abuse persist in 12 facilities stretching from Oregon to Florida, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics report released Wednesday.

The report analyzed data collected during more than 6,000 anonymous interviews last year at nearly 330 juvenile detention facilities.

Young people were asked about any forced or coerced sexual contact they experienced, whether by staffers or other kids, ranging from rape to unwanted touching to being shown sexual pictures or movies.

Nationwide, an estimated 7.1%

of children in juvenile facilities reported being sexually victimized during the previous 12 months, the report said. That's a drop compared with the last time the survey was done in 2012 when 9.5% of youth reported being victimized.

"Today's report shows that the juvenile detention system is making long-overdue strides in preventing sexual abuse," Lavinia Stannow, executive director of Just Detention International, an organization seeking to end sexual abuse in detention, said in a statement. "But even one sexual assault is too many and, as the report makes clear, this violence remains commonplace in youth facilities across the U.S."

Twelve facilities had dramatically higher rates of sexual victimization, including three juvenile residential centers in Florida, three in Texas and one each in Oregon, Arkansas, Idaho,



TIM REVELL, THE COLUMBUS (OHIO) DISPATCH/AP

An inmate walks at the Circleville Juvenile Correctional Facility outside Circleville, Ohio, on May 18, 2014. A new report says the number of kids who say they've been sexually victimized in juvenile detention centers has dropped but high rates persist in 12 facilities.

Georgia, Ohio and New Jersey, according to the report.

At the Liberty Juvenile Unit for Specialized Treatment in Florida, just over 26% of youth reported being sexually victimized in the past 12 months. Similarly high rates — about 22% and 21% — were reported at the Hastings Comprehensive Mental Health Treatment Program and Gulf Academy, both in Florida.

Florida officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment from The Associated Press.

At the juvenile Correctional Town in the small eastern Idaho town of St. Anthony, nearly 13%

of youths reported being sexually victimized within the last 12 months. Roughly 500 miles north in a Lewiston, Idaho, juvenile correctional center, no incidents of sexual victimization were reported.

Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections Director Monty Prow said he was surprised to learn the St. Anthony facility had a high rate of victimization. Calling children's safety the "primary task," he said his department would dig into the data.

"If the kids don't feel safe, they won't come to the treatment aspects of what we're trying to offer," he said.

The report's findings raise concerns about states' level of oversight of each problematic facility and whether enough is being done to uncover and respond to sexual abuse, said Marsha Levick, chief legal officer for the Juvenile Law Center, a rights organization within the child welfare and justice system.

"They need to step it up, quite frankly," she said. "The fact that we see such variability across and within states, of course, heightens the need to ensure that we're asking every child so we really understand what the victimization looks like."

Report: More are dying at home instead of in hospital

By MARILYNN MARCHIONE
Associated Press

For the first time since the early 1900s, more Americans are dying at home rather than in hospitals, a trend that reflects more hospice care and progress toward the kind of end that most people say they want.

Deaths in nursing homes also have declined, according to Wednesday's report in the New England Journal of Medicine.

"It's a good thing. Death has become overly medicalized over the last century" and this shows a turn away from that, said the lead author, Dr. Haider Warraich of the Veterans Affairs Boston Healthcare System.

Betsy McNair, a tour guide who now lives in Mexico, is proud of the ending she helped give her father: Robert McNair was 83 when he died at home in Belle Haven,

Va., in 2009, six weeks after learning he had lung cancer.

"I made him exactly what he wanted to eat, whenever he wanted it. He had a scotch every night."

"He had a very high quality of life. If he woke up at 2 o'clock in the morning and wanted to have coffee and pie, that's what we did," she said.

Warraich and Duke University graduate student Sarah Cross used government health statistics on deaths from natural causes, rather than accidents or homicides, from 2003 through 2017. The portion that occurred in hospitals fell from 40% to 30% over that period and in nursing homes from 24% to 21%.

Deaths in homes rose, from 24% to 31%.

Some assisted living centers may have been counted as homes;



THOMAS MARRINSON/AP

Allison Beach holds the hand of her ailing mother, Kathryn Beach, in 2016 at her home in Hinesburg, Vt., where the elder Beach died, reflecting a growing national trend.

researchers had no way to tell.

Allison Beach and her husband struggled to figure out how to get help for her mother, Kathryn Beach, who lived with them for three years before dying at their home in Hinesburg, Vt., in 2016. She had lost her vision, had suffered a fall and then succumbed to heart failure at 91.

The experience led Beach, who was a nurse, to seek spe-

cial training in end-of-life care, hoping to help others in such circumstances.

The rise of home hospice services has helped more people spend their last days at home, Warraich said.

"I have met many patients who just want to spend one day at home, around their dog, in their bed, able to eat home food," he said.

NY seeks to retain ban on flavored e-cigarettes

Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. — New York's ban on flavored e-cigarettes is still held up in court but the state may try to keep it alive and expand it to include menthol.

The state's Public Health and Health Planning Council is set to vote Thursday to keep the emergency ban on the books for another 90 days.

The council had approved the ban in September but a state appeals court blocked the state from enforcing it.

Health officials issued the regulations in response to worries that vaping may cause illnesses and that its use is growing among teenagers.

Harvey Weinstein reaches tentative \$25M deal with his accusers

By LARRY NEUMEISTER
Associated Press

NEW YORK — A tentative \$25 million settlement revealed Wednesday to end nearly every sexual misconduct lawsuit brought against Harvey Weinstein and his former film studio's board was praised by a plaintiff

and some lawyers but criticized by others who say those who opt out are punished.

Louise Geiss, a plaintiff in a Manhattan federal court class-action lawsuit, said the settlement was "our way to hold all women up. We are trying to create a new reality where this type of behavior is not accepted."

In a statement, she said the lawsuit was intended as a "wake-up call for all companies that they will not feel accountable if they protect predators in their midst."

"Now that The Weinstein Company is in bankruptcy and Harvey is about to stand to trial, this settlement will ensure that all survivors have the chance for

recovery and can move forward without Harvey's damaging lock on their careers," Geiss said.

Attorney Thomas Giuffra said the agreement was the same deal announced several months ago but with more punitive provisions aimed at forcing holdouts to accept it.

"The most troubling aspect of

this settlement is a punitive provision designed to force victims to settle," Giuffra said in a statement. "Shockingly, any funds that would have been allocated to claims from the settlement fund for non-settling claimants would be turned over to Harvey and Robert Weinstein to defend against their claims in court."

NATION

Biden unveils his immigration policy

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Joe Biden has joined his top Democratic presidential rivals in pledging to end for-profit migrant detention centers that existed while he was vice president. He also acknowledged through his campaign the “pain” caused by deportations carried out by the Obama administration.

Those moves, which come amid skepticism about Biden from some immigrant rights activists, are part of a comprehensive immigration policy released Wednesday by the former vice president. The wide-ranging plan positions Biden as a stark contrast to President Donald Trump but not as far to the left as some of his rivals for the Democratic nomination are.

“It’s all about families. It’s all about families to me,” Biden said at a Las Vegas union hall filled with casino workers, including many immigrants.

Position papers released earlier Wednesday went further, with an explicit nod to the criticism Biden has gotten for immigration policy under President Barack Obama.

“Joe Biden understands the pain felt by every family across the U.S. that has had a loved one removed from the country, including under the Obama-Biden administration,” the campaign wrote.

Biden and his campaign outlined priorities that include ending family separations at the border, rolling back Trump’s travel limits on citizens from certain Muslim-majority countries and providing a citizenship path for about 11 million people in the U.S. illegally, including immediately shielding from deportation the immigrants who were brought to the country illegally as children.

The former vice president also pledged to enforce existing asy-

lum law by reversing the Trump administration’s moves that have made claiming asylum extremely difficult, while ending the national emergency that Trump has declared to divert Pentagon appropriations to the construction of a wall at the U.S.-Mexico border.

As a counter to Trump’s wall and asylum limits, Biden calls for increasing the annual cap on refugees from 18,000 to 125,000.

He emphasized a proposal to spend \$4 billion in four years aimed at stabilizing Central American governments and economies. The idea, Biden explained in Nevada, is to address the root causes of mass migration and relieve pressure at the U.S. border, where the scene of migrant detention facilities has drawn international attention.

“We should be engaging and offering our help to organize this hemisphere right now,” Biden said. “I’m going to spend, literally, a billion dollars a year to build up those countries so there’s no reason to leave in the beginning.” Biden joins progressive Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders, along with Mayor Pete Buttigieg, as Democratic White House hopefuls promising to end the for-profit detention centers.

The U.S. government contracted for such facilities under Obama, drawing criticism from civil rights groups at the time. But the practice has gained new scrutiny under Trump’s hard-line approach to immigration, especially his administration’s practice of separating families in the facilities.

The Republican president has defended his policies as necessary to protect U.S. security and American workers’ economic interests, and he’s made clear that he will emphasize the issue again in 2020, just as he did to energize his white conservative base in 2016.

Trump criticizes Thunberg after Time magazine honor

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump lashed out at 16-year-old climate activist Greta Thunberg on Thursday, a day after she was named by Time as its Person of the Year, calling her selection “ridiculous.”

The Swedish teen has become a symbol of a growing movement of young climate activists after leading weekly school strikes in Sweden that inspired similar actions in about 100 cities worldwide. She has drawn large crowds with her fiery appearances at protests and conferences over the past year and a half.

In a Thursday morning tweet,

Trump said, “Greta must work on her Anger Management problem, then go to a good old fashioned movie with a friend!”

He added: “Chill! Greta, Chill!” Thunberg responded Thursday by changing her Twitter profile bio to read: “A teenager working on her anger management problem. Currently chilling and watching a good old fashioned movie with a friend.”

It’s not the first time Trump has lashed out after not being recognized for his influence. In 2015, Trump attacked German Chancellor Angela Merkel for “ruining Germany” after she was named Person of the Year when he was listed as a runner-up.



ANDY BARRON, THE RENO (NEV.) GAZETTE-JOURNAL/AP

Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., gives a speech at Truckee Meadows Community College in Reno, Nev., on Tuesday.

Warren ‘wealth tax’ estimates too optimistic, analysis says

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Elizabeth Warren’s signature “wealth tax” would bring in at least \$1 trillion less in new government revenue than the Democratic presidential candidate estimates while ultimately shrinking the economy over the next 30 years, according to a new academic analysis.

The Massachusetts senator wants a 2% tax on fortunes worth \$50 million-plus and a levy three times that on anyone who has a net worth of more than \$1 billion.

She has pledged to use those to dramatically remake government, offering universal child care and free tuition at public universities while wiping out most student debt for 42 million Americans and helping to finance a “Medicare for All” plan providing government-sponsored health care nationwide.

But the piggy bank that Warren wants to use to accomplish her sweeping policy promises won’t be nearly as flush with cash as she believes, the University of Pennsylvania’s Penn Wharton Budget Model, which provides nonpartisan analysis of public policy proposals, found Thursday.

Warren’s campaign pushed back, saying the anal-

ysis was of a “different and worse” plan than what the senator is proposing.

The Penn model says the proposed wealth tax will raise between \$2.3 trillion and \$2.7 trillion over 10 years, or as much as \$1.4 trillion less than Warren’s campaign estimates. It also concludes that the new taxes would cause the economy to contract between 0.9% and 2.1% by 2050 — depending on how the new revenue is spent.

The model says the new tax would reduce “private capital formation” enough to drive the U.S. economy’s average wage down between 0.9% and 2.3%, even affecting households not rich enough to qualify for the tax.

The findings are important because Warren’s proposal has been among the most popular — and most scrutinized — of her campaign. It’s given the senator an economic populist edge that helped vault her among the Democratic primary’s front-runners.

The race’s other top progressive candidate, Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont, has proposed an even higher tax on top fortunes — but it’s such a part of Warren rallies that her crowds often break into chants of “2 cents!” in a rallying cry for her wealth tax.

Bloomberg pledges a ‘war on poverty’

Associated Press

STOCKTON, Calif. — Michael Bloomberg took his Democratic presidential campaign to California on Wednesday, pledging to launch a “war on poverty” at an event in a city once known as the nation’s foreclosure capital.

“As president, my job will be to move all Americans ahead, and that includes committing our country to new and innovative ways to combat poverty. There has to be a war on poverty,” the New York City billionaire said while campaigning in Stockton.

His plan includes initiatives to raise the minimum wage and

expand affordable housing. He outlined them after a community discussion with Stockton Mayor Michael Tubbs, who endorsed Bloomberg and said he had the “record, resources and relationships” to defeat President Donald Trump.

The trip marked Bloomberg’s first to California since launching his 2020 White House bid. Since he’s bypassing the four early voting states, Bloomberg — a former New York City mayor — is hanging his campaign success on states such as California, which votes on Super Tuesday and offers the biggest delegate haul in the primary contest. He’s already

spent at least \$60 million on television advertisements, though his spokesman wouldn’t say how much he’s spent in California specifically. He said the campaign has hired three staff members in California.

Bloomberg said he thinks his pragmatic message will resonate with Californians, nearly 15 million of whom will be eligible to vote in the 2020 Democratic presidential primary.

“Californians understand nothing’s simple — you have to have real solutions,” he said. “And you have to have the evolutionary rather than revolutionary change.”

New sanctions on Iran target transportation



Iran says American authorities are holding about 20 Iranian nationals in jail and on Monday said it was ready for more prisoner swaps with the U.S.

An 18-month effort by a top Office of Management and Budget official to eliminate the government personnel office left the plan on life support, despite a bipartisan consensus that the operation is deeply troubled. Congressional Democrats and Republicans whose support was essential to disbanding the agency dismissed the plan as ill-conceived and unlikely to save money or shrink the federal workforce.

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WORLD

UK votes in bid to resolve Brexit stalemate

Associated Press

LONDON — Britons who have endured three years of wrangling over their country's messy divorce from the European Union cast ballots Thursday in an election billed as a way out of the Brexit stalemate.

The contest pits Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who says he will take Britain out of the EU by Jan. 31, against opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn, who promises another referendum on Brexit.

All 650 seats in the House of Commons are up for grabs in the election, which is being held

more than two years ahead of schedule.

At a fish market in the eastern port of Grimsby, seafood company owner Nathan Godley summed up the hopes of many people that — one way or another — the election would provide a pathway to a resolution of Brexit.

"I think we all got a bit weary of the politicians over the last few years really and I think having a government with a majority to give them the clout to actually do what they want is a good thing," he said.

Johnson voted at Methodist Central Hall in London, accom-

panied by his dog, Dilyn. Corbyn was greeted by supporters and an activist dressed as Elmo from "Sesame Street" as he arrived to vote in his north London constituency.

With so much at stake, political parties have pushed the boundaries of truth, transparency and reality during five weeks of campaigning.

Johnson's Conservative Party was criticized for using misleading tactics on social media, while Corbyn's Labour Party promised to tax the rich, boost government spending and nationalize industries such as railroads and water

companies. One of the focal points of the ugly campaign was the National Health Service, a deeply respected institution that has struggled to meet rising demand after nine years of austerity under Conservative-led governments.

The prime minister called early elections in hopes of breaking a logjam in Parliament that stalled approval of his Brexit agreement in October. Johnson didn't have a majority in the last Parliament and was stymied once he lost the support of the Democratic Unionist Party because of concerns about how Northern Ireland would be treated under

his deal with the EU.

Opinion polls have consistently shown the Conservative Party in the lead, but recent surveys suggest the margin may have narrowed in the final days of campaigning.

While Labour is unlikely to win an outright majority, smaller opposition parties hope to win enough seats so they can team up to block Johnson's Brexit plans.

All of the parties are nervous about the verdict of voters who are more willing to abandon long-held party loyalties after three years of wrangling over Brexit.

Outdated and dangerous childbirth practices persist in parts of Europe

By MARIA CHENG

Associated Press

BARCELONA — When Clara Massons was in labor with her son, a midwife climbed onto her bed and pushed down on Massons' belly, explaining that she was helping to deliver her baby. For the next few hours, the midwife and a doctor took turns pressing down during contractions, using an old, now controversial technique for troubled deliveries.

Masson said her pleas to stop were ignored at the Barcelona hospital where she delivered two years ago, and she later complained to authorities.

The hospital said doctors took "appropriate measures" during her delivery.

"I thought I was going to die," she said. "For one month after, my belly was blue and purple."

The technique is known as the Kristeller maneuver and was first described in an 1867 German textbook. It is sometimes used during the second stage of labor to assist delivery and avoid a cesarean section when complications arise.

But many doctors in developed countries say they have stopped using it because of the potential for broken bones, organ damage and other complications. The World Health Organization does not recommend the technique.

Yet the procedure is still commonly performed in many European countries, highlighting how once-accepted practices can persist even long after they're considered to be unnecessary or even dangerous.

Europe has some of the world's lowest maternal and infant death rates, and assertions of mistreatment during childbirth are more common in Africa, Asia and Latin America. But the Kristeller maneuver and some other medical practices related to childbirth have come under increasing scrutiny in Europe, including complaints about inadequate anesthesia, surgical incisions during vaginal births and failure to seek patient consent for certain procedures.

"Depending on the act, these

practices rise to the level of a human rights violation," said Mindy Roseman, director of a global justice and women's rights program at Yale Law School. "Not obtaining consent from women for medical procedures, not providing pain relief or doing something that's not scientifically justified, that is simply not the standard of care and it's troubling wherever that occurs."

Last year, Croatian lawmaker Ivana Nincovic Lesandric drew attention to the anesthesia issue when she complained to Parliament she did not receive any for an emergency procedure after a miscarriage.

"I don't think I've ever been in (a) much more painful situation in my life," Lesandric said.

In response, the speaker of the House chastised Lesandric for speaking over her allotted time and for publicly sharing such intimate details, saying it put him in an awkward position.

The Ministry of Health, while not directly commenting on her case, said doctors typically use a local anesthetic for such procedures. Officials suggested there may have been a "misunderstanding" on Lesandric's part regarding the type of anesthesia she received.

Dr. Frederick Mercier, chair of obstetrics for the European Society of Anesthesiology, said general anesthesia is "most often used" in procedures like the one Lesandric had. He said local anesthesia isn't used because "it is less effective."

In submissions for a U.N. report presented in October, several European countries or government-appointed experts acknowledged lapses in how informed consent from women during childbirth was obtained. The Czech Republic wrote that women were sometimes given documents to sign "without any explanation or information on the nature or reason for the procedure."

In October, the Council of Europe passed a resolution on "obstetrical and gynecological violence." Among other recommendations, it called on European member countries to implement

laws on informed consent and to create specific reporting and complaint mechanisms, including sanctions for mistreatment.

Dr. Ligita Jokubkiene, of Sweden, said she thinks it is still used because many doctors and midwives aren't aware of the dangers. She learned in medical school but no longer performs it herself.



EMILIO MORENATTI/AP

Clara Massons holds her 2-year-old son, Jaume, at her home in Barcelona, Spain, on June 19. Massons said a midwife and a doctor used an outdated and dangerous practice during Jaume's birth.

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WORLD

Officials say gunman hanged by angry mob in Baghdad square

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — An angry mob killed a 16-year-old and strung up the corpse by its feet from a traffic pole after the teen shot and killed six people Thursday, including four anti-government protesters, Iraqi officials said.

Dozens of people pointed their cellphones at the body dangling high above them in a central Baghdad square. Videos circulating on social media showed the young man being beaten and dragged across the street.

The violence underscored the growing fears and suspicions swirling around the 8-week-old protest movement, which engulfed Iraq on Oct. 1 when thousands took to the streets to decry government corruption, poor services and scarcity of jobs.

A string of mysterious acts of bloodshed by unknown groups has put anti-government protesters on edge and eroded their faith in the ability of state security forces to protect them.

On Dec. 6, 25 protesters were killed when gunmen in pickup trucks opened fire in Baghdad's Khilani Square. That same week, mysterious knife attacks targeted more than a dozen anti-government protesters in Tahrir Square, the hub of the protest movement.

In recent days, abductions and assassinations of high-profile civil activists have stoked paranoia among demonstrators. Protesters largely blame Iran-backed militias for the attacks and see the violence as a campaign to instill fear and weaken their peaceful movement.

Thursday's bloodshed began when the young gunman opened fire in Baghdad's Wathba Square, killing two shop owners and four protesters. Security officials said the teen was wanted by police on drug-related charges and was running from security forces.

An enraged mob beat the young man to death, security and health officials said. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity. At least eight people were wounded, the officials said.

Influential Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr called those who killed the teen "terrorists" and warned that if they were not identified within 48 hours, he would order his militia to leave the square. Members of Saraya Salam, or Peace Brigades, are deployed in the square to protect protesters.

The killing of the teenager was condemned by the wider protest movement in Tahrir Square, which said in a statement that the perpetrators were not part of their peaceful demonstrations.

Defense of Myanmar army is blasted in genocide case

Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — Lawyers seeking to halt what they allege is ongoing genocide in Myanmar have slammed leader Aung San Suu Kyi's defense of her country's armed forces, saying Thursday that the Nobel Peace Prize winner and former pro-democracy icon chose to ignore "unspeakable" crimes targeting Muslim civilians.

The United Nation's top court is conducting emergency legal proceedings to determine if military personnel committed genocide against Myanmar's Rohingya minority in 2017. The African nation of Gambia, acting on behalf of a large group of Muslim countries, requested the International Court of Justice hearings and alleges that human rights violations against the Rohingya continue.

With maps, satellite imagery and graphic photos, Myanmar's accusers have detailed what they say is a deliberate campaign of ethnic cleansing and genocide — including the killing of civilians, raping of women and torching of houses — that forced more than 700,000 Rohingya to flee to neighboring Bangladesh.

Gambia wants the U.N. court

to take "all measures within its power to prevent all acts that amount to or contribute to the crime of genocide."

The U.N. court proceedings in The Hague produced the spectacle Wednesday of Suu Kyi, who was awarded the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize for championing democracy and rights under Myanmar's then-ruling junta, defending the army that kept her under house arrest for some 15 years.

"We heard nothing about sexual violence from Myanmar yesterday, not a single word about it," lawyer Paul Reicher told the world court Thursday as Suu Kyi watched impassively. "Because it is undeniable and unspeakable, they chose to ignore it completely. I can't really blame them. I would hate having to be the one to defend it."

Suu Kyi testified Wednesday the exodus of Rohingya was a tragic consequence of hostilities initiated by insurgents. The allegations of genocide and other crimes by the army stemmed from "an internal armed conflict started by coordinated and comprehensive armed attacks ... to which Myanmar's defense services responded," she said.

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Stay connected and hey, welcome to the neighborhood.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police pay off layaways at Walmart store

FL DADE CITY — A Florida police department gave back this holiday season by paying off all the layaways at a Walmart store, allowing 26 customers to pick up their purchases.

The Dade City Police Department said in a Facebook post that Chief James Walters and his staff walked into the store to pay off 26 layaway accounts totaling more than \$4,300.

The money came from anonymous donors and the Dade City Police Foundation. The buyers were surprised when they received the good news on a phone call from the police chief.

Man rescued after falling into abandoned well

CA VENTURA — Firefighters rescued an 87-year-old man who received minor injuries when he fell into an abandoned well in a southern California neighborhood.

The Ventura County Star reported that the man was apparently mowing the lawn at his home near Simi Valley when he fell into a hole previously covered for more than a decade.

A woman in the area said she was in her car when she kept hearing a sound before following the voice, discovering the man and calling 911.

Ventura County Fire officials said the man was alert and able to communicate with firefighters when they arrived to find him about 25 feet below the surface.

Man charged with theft in \$10K bingo win

LA MONROE — The luck ran out for a Louisiana man allegedly caught rigging bingo games to win more than \$10,000.

John Cook, 43, was booked into the Ouachita Correctional Facility on a felony theft charge and two counts for failing to appear multiple times following his June 29 arrest, according to a Monroe Police warrant obtained by news outlets.

Police said Cook was recorded on video at a bingo parlor manipulating a "Bonanza Bingo" game by handpicking the balls he wanted to play and then hiding the winner until he was ready to end the game. The warrant said Cook did that four times and won thousands for three people, including his sister.

Teen runaway found 'camping' inside store

NC GREENVILLE — Employees at a Bed, Bath & Beyond in North Carolina discovered an uninvited sleeper guest hiding in the store when they opened up Monday morning.

The Greenville employees called local police around 8:30 a.m. and officers responded to a "breaking and entering in progress," according to The News & Observer.

The intruder turned out to be



ALAN CAMPBELL, ROCKY MOUNT (N.C.) TELEGRAM/AP

Give us a kiss

Shelby Waggon receives a nuzzle from Wizard, a 5-year-old alpaca, on Tuesday at Alpaca Bella Fina Ranch in Whitakers, N.C.

a 14-year-old runaway who had "camped out" at the store overnight after leaving home, Greenville police spokeswoman Kristen Hunter said.

Scientist: Rodent complaints led to firing

NM SOCORRO — A New Mexico scientist said she was fired from a New Mexico Tech lab job after complaining about a rodent infestation.

Chemical engineer Glenanne Johnson was terminated from her position as a lab manager at the Energetic Materials Research and Testing Center following her complaints about mouse droppings and dead rodents, KOB-TV reported. Johnson said the work environment made her sick and she later tested positive for hantavirus — an infectious disease spread by rodents.

The university would not comment on why she is no longer employed.

Hail drops on city for 2nd time in 18 days

AZ PHOENIX — For the second time in 18 days, large hail coated the desert in parts of the Phoenix metro area, National Weather Service me-

THE CENSUS

30

The number of days a former housekeeper at a hotel was sentenced to for stealing a guest's \$35,000 diamond ring. Chrystal Monique Gregory, 28, pleaded guilty to grand larceny in August. Prosecutors said she used an employee key to break into a couple's suite at The Cavalier hotel. Once inside, she entered a master code to open a safe where the victims left the 2½-carat diamond engagement ring. The ring was never recovered, prosecutor's office spokeswoman Macie Allen said.

teorologists said some pop-up thunderstorms dropped hail in some sections of north Phoenix and other areas recently.

It wasn't as widespread as Nov. 21 when hail fell in parts of Phoenix and the suburbs of Goodyear, Avondale, Tempe, Mesa and Apache Junction — an unusual sight in the desert.

Last week, hail blanketed some north Phoenix freeways and made it look like a winter wonderland for a while until rain and warmer temperatures took over.

Mom surprised at how twin daughters survived

WA LANGLEY — The mother of twin 4-year-old girls who survived a car crash that killed their dad north of Seattle said she's astonished at what they did.

Authorities said that after the car plunged down an embank-

ment and into thick forest and undergrowth, the girls unbuckled themselves from their booster seats, realized their dad wasn't talking and climbed out a broken rear window.

They made it back up to the road, where they were spotted by a woman who happened to drive by.

The girls' mother, Esther Cridler, told The Seattle Times they are "independent," but she was astonished by what they did.

The crash, on Whidbey Island, killed Corey Simmons, 47, of Langley. He was not wearing a seat belt, authorities said.

State bird's status changed to threatened

HI HONOLULU — The federal government changed the protection status of Hawaii's state bird from endangered to threatened, officials said.

Federal officials said the nene has been brought back from the brink of extinction through a breeding program and habitat restoration, Hawaii Public Radio reported.

The nene is native to the Hawaiian Islands. In the 1950s the number of nenes fell to about 30 birds in the wild, but long-term efforts restored the population to about 3,000 statewide, wildlife officials said.

Man arrested after ride on mule deer

OR RILEY — Police said a young man was arrested after he was caught on video riding on the back of a mule deer that was trapped in a fenced area in rural eastern Oregon.

Oregon State Police said Jacob Belcher, 18, of Riley was arrested Dec. 6 and charged with wildlife harassment and animal abuse.

Police said someone sent the state police's Fish and Wildlife division a video of Belcher climbing onto the young mule deer buck and riding the animal, which appears exhausted.

Troopers said the deer makes grunting or bleating sounds throughout the video.

From wire reports

WEEKEND



Styles, Payne take
different directions

Music, Page 37

Sandler shows another facet

Actor better known
for comedic roles is
getting Oscar buzz
for serious turn
as a jewelry dealer
in 'Uncut Gems'

Movies, Page 23



WEEKEND: GADGETS

Marvel-ous expansion

New Orleans school joins comic-book universe

BY KEVIN MCGILL
Associated Press

The city known for 19th century Voodoo queen Marie Laveau and for the tarot card readers who tell fortunes in its historic French Quarter is about to play host to a different kind of sorcerer—at least in the Marvel comics universe.

Marvel announced plans this month to debut a new comic book, “Strange Academy,” in March. Described as a supernatural coming-of-age saga, it’s set at a New Orleans school for teenagers from across the universe who have a variety of mystical powers.

The youngsters, facing typical adolescent anxieties and atypical creatures from other dimensions, will be

new characters. But they’ll be under the tutelage of some Marvel stalwarts, including the school’s flamboyant caped namesake, Doctor Strange.

Veteran Marvel writer and artist Skottie Young is working with longtime Marvel artist Humberto Ramos on the project. In a recent interview, Young said he and co-workers first thought about setting the story in New York, where the Doctor Strange character resides.

Young, however, had recently visited New Orleans for the first time, celebrating his 40th birthday.

“It just kind of occurred to me that there’s a nice history and folklore about magic and the mystic arts and the dark arts and things like that that kind of surround the mythos of New Orleans,” Young said. “Having just gone there myself for my 40th, I thought that would be a great place to set it. And that it would be awesome just to go back again and do a nice little research trip.”

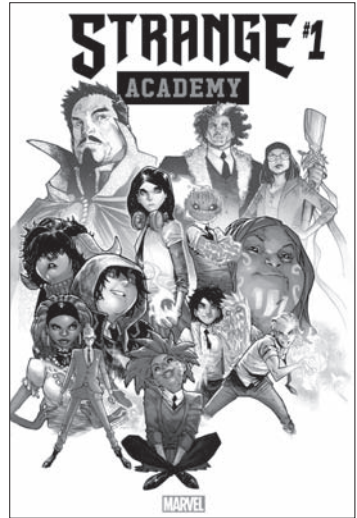
Marvel editors accompanied Young on a return trip. Visits to a French Quarter Voodoo museum, a 280-year-old candle-lit bar on Bourbon Street, courtyards with rusty gates and untamed greenery—all will inform the story lines and art of the new publication.

Young said the series is aimed at a broad comic book audience but also will appeal to young adult readers who in the past might have been fans of the Harry Potter novels or similar works.

“What we’re really trying to do is tell those classic coming-of-age stories that we’ve seen in so many other properties or other projects out there in the world, whether it be TV or film or novels or comics,” Young said. “Whether it’s kids running around mazes or kids at a magic school or people running around trying to survive a post-apocalyptic landscape.”

Ramos, perhaps best known among comic fans for his work on Spider-Man comics, said in an emailed statement that Young pitched the idea to him more than a year ago.

“I told him I have and always will love Spider-Man, but I wanted to try something new and exciting with my friends and my Marvel family. He began to pitch me on an incredible project for the rest of the weekend,” Ramos said.



HUMBERTO RAMOS, MARVEL/AP

Cover art, above, and page art, left, from Marvel’s new comic book, “Strange Academy,” a new chapter in the Marvel universe that will debut in March.

Not that the new project will necessarily keep Ramos from drawing Spider-Man. As any fan of Marvel comics or the Marvel Studios movies knows, characters from one series often pop up in another: Doctor Voodoo and Scarlet Witch are Marvel characters who will teach at Strange Academy.

“It would not be out of left field for us to throw Spider-Man into an issue if we wanted, or have Wolverine come in,” Young said. “For a while, Wolverine ran a mutants’ school. So he understands the ins and outs of teaching kids with this level of power.”



GADGET WATCH

Bluetooth technology marches on; so should you

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

You might have a Bluetooth speaker from as far back as the mid-’90s that still works great, but with the choices getting better, bigger, and in many cases smaller, keep in mind, the Bluetooth technology inside also changes. Bluetooth 5.0 is the latest, and with it, you’ll get increased wireless range and speed, and can increase the number of devices simultaneously connected.

Here are a bunch of recommendations. Regular prices are listed, but check around for holiday specials.



BRAVEN X/2 portable speaker

Braven’s BRV-X/2 rugged portable speaker has a durable construction. You can take it for a swim since it has an IPX7 waterproof rating. This allows it to float alongside you while broadcasting your playlist with 20W of output. The sound is perfect for a variety of tunes in high and low volumes. Inside is a battery for 18 hours of playtime, USB-C charging, and built-in microphones for noise-canceling handsfree calls. You can also pair two BRV-X/2 speakers with the wireless stereo pairing technology.

Online: Zagg.com; \$99.99 for the BRV-X/2

The tough-looking DemerBox DB2 is a great-sounding Bluetooth sound system built into a rugged 100 percent waterproof and crush-proof Pelican case. Inside the box are a pair of 3-inch, 8 ohms, aluminum cones with rubber surround drivers, resulting in loud, clear sound, which is enough to be the life of a tailgate party. The case has latches to keep it shut and there are holes to attach a lock for extra

security since it opens with storage room for valuable items like your smartphone, wallet and keys. Inside is a USB charging port for charging a smartphone or whatever needs a boost of power. The latest DemerBoxes have multiple pairing modes to include up to six DemerBox speakers paired together and 40-hour battery life before a charge with the

included AC adapter is needed. Online: demerbox.com, \$299 for the DB2

Ultimate Ears Boom 3 is one of my favorites with its powerful and booming sound coming from the surround-sound speaker with two 2-inch drivers and two 2-by-4-inch passive radiators inside a body covered in two-tone fabric. You can select your favorite sound from four

presets and a customized tuner. With the latest Bluetooth technology, up to eight Bluetooth devices can be paired along with up to two source devices. A 15-hour USB rechargeable battery is inside and a charging dock (\$39.99, sold separately) is available for wireless charging. The Boom 3 features the Magic Button to select your music choice directly on the speakers, and now Android users can use the button to access Spotify.

Online: ultimatespeakers.com; \$149.99



Ultimate Ears Boom 3

ULTIMATE EARS/TNS

WEEKEND: MOVIES

A PRECIOUS GEM

Josh and Benny Safdie pursued Adam Sandler for their crime thriller. Now the actor is earning Oscar buzz for his rare dramatic performance



CHRIS PIZZELLO, INVISION/AP

“Uncut Gems” star Adam Sandler, center, poses for with the film’s directors, Benny Safdie, left, and Josh Safdie at the Toronto Film Festival in September.

By JAKE COYLE
Associated Press

Adam Sandler was waiting to be thrown into a midtown fountain on Sixth Avenue for a scene in Josh and Benny Safdie’s “Uncut Gems” when he noticed a familiar face on the sidewalk.

The Safdies like to capture as much authentic New York energy as possible in their films and frequently plant their cameras across the block for scenes like the one Sandler was about to shoot. So Sandler was hiding in a parked car, trying not arouse any attention, when he called out to the passerby.

“I say, ‘Lorne!’ He looks in the car and gets in and talked to me for a minute,” recalled Sandler of spotting his old “Saturday Night Live” boss, Lorne Michaels. “I said ‘I’m doing this movie — I’m going to fill you in on the young and the hip — with the Safdie brothers.’”

“He goes, (here Sandler dons the requisite Michaels impression) ‘I know the Safdie brothers. They grew up in my building,’” Sandler said, laughing and shaking his head. “I can never get anything over on Lorne. I thought I had one cool thing.”

The central setting of “Uncut Gems” — the 47th Street diamond district — is just a short walk from the NBC studios at 30 Rockefeller Center where Sandler broke through in the early 1990s on

‘When I was making the movie, I just gave them 100% trust. I just felt like I wanted to be in their world.’

Adam Sandler

“SNL.” As far as Sandler has traveled since then — and his latest will strike many as his greatest departure yet — the wild, chaotic, unhinged “Uncut Gems” is just a stone’s throw from Sandler’s beginnings.

It’s not that Sandler hasn’t since proven his considerable dramatic range. Paul Thomas Anderson’s “Punch-Drunk Love” revealed the sensitivity beneath the genial man-child persona of his comedies. And while Sandler has never strayed from stand-up or the broader comedies he’s currently churning out for Netflix, he has consistently dipped his toe into drama every few years, including the James L. Brooks romantic comedy “Spanglish” (2004), Judd Apatow’s meta comedy “Funny People” (2009) and Noah Baumbach’s family drama “The Meyerowitz Stories (New and Selected)” (2017).

But the scuzzy, frenetic neo-realism of the Safdie brothers is something else, entirely. In it, Sandler stars as Howard Ratner, a gemstone merchant and compulsive gambler whose wide web of debts, betrayals and schemes render his life a mad scramble. He’s like a plate-spinner who drops every plate but keeps throwing up five more. His downfall, and perhaps his destiny, is perpetually and harrowingly close at hand.

Adam Sandler plays a diamond merchant in “Uncut Gems.”

A24/AP

The Safdies first sent Sandler their script in 2012.

“I kept hearing about the Safdie brothers and that they wanted to talk to me about a movie,” Sandler said. “I didn’t know their work, so I started with ‘Good Time’ (the Safdies’ previous film, starring Robert Pattinson as a small-time hustler). I watched them all, and I loved them. We would talk on the phone and then we met each other. I mean, we are very close. We talk all day, all night about everything. I love these guys.”

“When I was making the movie, I just gave them 100% trust. I just felt like I wanted to be in their world.”

For years, if not decades, Sandler has consistently declined interviews with print journalists. But on the morning after “Uncut Gems” made its premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival, he sat for an interview with The Associated Press alongside Josh and Benny. They had spent a late evening partying together and Sandler was regretting not eating after the premiere. “What a mistake,” he said while the Safdies laughed.

Moments before the premiere of “Uncut Gems,” one audience member hollered “An Oscar for the Sandman!” By the end of the movie, most in attendance agreed. Sandler’s performance has been arguably the most acclaimed of the 53-year-old’s career.

“Uncut Gems” is an especially intense experience. If you remember the loud, discombobulating drug-dealer scene in Anderson’s “Boogie Nights,” “Uncut Gems” runs at that high-pitched

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24



WEEKEND: MOVIES

FROM PAGE 23

frenzy for pretty much its entire length. For the Saffies, it's long been an obsession. Howard is based loosely on a boss of their father's boss. Though Pattinson once pursued the part and, Jonah Hill was momentarily attached, the directors felt strongly about Sandler being right for it.

"We wanted Howard to be lovable. Likable is another question, but lovable is something real," Josh said. "We grew up idolizing him. The records, the movies. I just recently told Sandler I was crying watching 'The Wedding Singer' on a plane. You can just feel it in the actors opposite him. People just feel like they're involved in something ineffable."

Though separated by nearly two decades in age, the Brooklyn-born Sandler and the Queens-bred Saffies have become close, a friendship forged on basketball (they are equally dedicated Knicks fans), a shared sense of humor and a New Yorker's lack of pretense.

"Since we agreed to worked together, which was pretty quick after we met, we have been nonstop 'Uncut Gems,'" Sandler said. "Morning, afternoon, night." "I don't want it to end," Josh said.

They are simpatico in thinking, for example, that it's both hysterical and perfect that famed New York sports talk radio host Mike Francesa has a small role as a restaurateur-bookie in "Uncut Gems" — just one ingredient in the movie's strange brew of fiction and reality. (Former NBA star Kevin Garnett also plays himself.) Sandler's initial reticence was alleviated in part by the strong approval of Anderson, who shot part of Sandler's last stand-up special, "100% Fresh."

"When he saw 'Good Time,' he was like, 'Oh, my God. Those guys,'" Sandler said. "These guys did something to Paul that stopped him in his tracks. When Paul saw this movie, he texted after: 'Still in the theater. Can't move.'"

Plunging into the cinematic world of the Saffies led Sandler into some unlikely places for a movie star with more than \$2 billion in box office to his name, and not only that fountain on Sixth Avenue. There's also a memorable scene in which Howard ends up naked in a car's trunk and a messy nightclub run-in with Abel Tesfaye, aka The Weeknd.

"Abel was a very nice, gentle guy to me. He just wanted to be nice to me as a human being, not throw me on the ground," Sandler said. "We wanted Abel ultimately to spit in my face."

"The way we approach violence in all our movies, when you see violence unfold in a non-organized way, it's really sloppy," Josh said. "I got punched in the face really badly once. I got knocked out. The only thing I remember from the moment of falling to the ground and seeing a little girl with her mother turn and yell. You kind of want to get at that feeling with violence."

The Saffies imagined Howard as an insatiable, larger-than-life figure, like porno publisher Al Goldstein or comedian Rodney Dangerfield. But they also say he changed over time, becoming a kind of living document that they funneled details from their lives into.

"Ultimately, he's a hyper romantic person. He's a gambler. All gamblers are really romantic people," Josh said. "You want to slap them around. Their romance gets sort of gross at that point. He's a mystical guy. He believes in things."

More than anything, that's what Sandler grabbed onto.

"I love when the guys told me he was a dreamer," Sandler said. "It's a case of: You see other people have stuff. Not matter where you go, no matter what house you look in, you do think: How come they got that? They got it figured out in that house. I think he thinks everyone else has it right, and he's like: I want it right."



Kevin Hart, from left, Dwayne Johnson, Jack Black and Karen Gillan return for the sequel, "Jumanji: The Next Level."

SONN/AP

Next-level comedy

Jumanji sequel amps up body swapping, video game high jinks with riotous returns

By KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service

In 2017, director Jake Kasdan rebooted the '90s family adventure film "Jumanji" by plunking John Hughes-style teen characters into a wilderness-set video game. "Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle" was a critical and commercial success, anchored by the charms of megastars Dwayne Johnson, Kevin Hart, Karen Gillan and Jack Black, and the unique pleasure of watching them all play against type. Kasdan and company (including co-writers Jeff Pinkner and Scott Rosenberg) know a good formula when they see it. So the sequel, "Jumanji: The Next Level," simply offers more and more of it: There's more jaw-droppingly crazy video game high jinks, and especially, more stars playing personas vastly different from theirs.

The video game setting allowed a motley crew of teens (Alex Wolff, Madison Iseman, Morgan Turner and Ser'Darius Blain) to choose their own avatars and see what happens to them when they get to be someone else for a little while. Self-effacing nerd Spencer (Wolff) learned his own strengths as the muscle-bound Dr. Smolder Bravestone (Johnson), but it was also hilarious to watch Johnson play the insecure and jumpy Spencer. However, the breakout player of the "Welcome to the Jungle" ensemble was most definitely Jack Black, who perfectly inhabited teen queen Bethany (Iseman) in his portly cartographer's bod. In "The Next Level," Kasdan doubles, even triples down on this conceit, to rather hilarious returns.

The film opens with the pals now in college, returning home for winter break. It's a bit of a rocky opening, espe-

cially since it feels like Danny DeVito, as Spencer's grandfather Eddie, and Danny Glover, as his long-lost friend and business partner Milo, have been seemingly shoehorned into the dynamic. But the reason for their presence all becomes clear when Martha (Turner), Bethany and Fridge (Blaine), discover that Spencer's gone missing. They once again transport themselves into the game, accidentally bringing Eddie and Milo with them. This time, Fridge ends up in Black's avatar, Oberon, while DeVito and Glover find themselves in the form of the strapping Bravestone and tiny zoologist Finbar (Hart), respectively.

For a film that features such eye-popping sequences as aggressive mandrills on floating bridges, inexplicable blimps and an ostrich herd/dune buggy race, this is very much a performance-driven picture. The second time around, there's even less of a plot, with Rory McCann in some impressive post-apocalyptic Night's Watch gear snatching the jewel they have to recover to win and escape the game.

The pleasures of "Jumanji: The Next Level" are not visual or story-based, as they revolve around the ability of each of our stars and their abilities to do impressions. Hart's nuanced mimicry of Glover is downright inspired, and the story offers up a few chances for the characters to avatar swap, showing off the actors' abilities to embody the different jock/nerd/cheerleader/cantankerous grandpa personas. Once again, this is a one-joke movie, but for the time being, that joke still has some tread on the tires, especially with such charming stars and some light innovation. It remains to be seen how much mileage this franchise can sustain on charm alone, however.

"Jumanji: The Next Level" is rated PG for menacing fantasy action and some mild language. Running time: 123 minutes.

ALSO PLAYING

'Black Christmas'

As Hawthorne College student Riley Stone and her Mu Kappa Epsilon sisters prepare to deck the halls, a black-masked stalker begins killing sorority women one by one in "Black Christmas," an update of the 1974 holiday horror classic. A review of the film, starring Imogen Poots, far right, and Aleyse Shannon, was not available at press time. It is rated PG-13 for violence, terror, thematic content involving sexual assault, language, sexual material and drinking. Running time: 92 minutes.

Universal Pictures



WEEKEND: MOVIES

In the hot seat

Eastwood on criticism of fact-based film 'Richard Jewell,' finding stories

By MARCELA ISAZA
Associated Press

For his film "Richard Jewell," Clint Eastwood takes aim at the media and federal investigators for what he sees as a rush to judgment after the 1996 Atlanta Olympics bombing. The 89-year-old director calls security guard Richard Jewell's story "a great American tragedy," one he's been trying to tell for five years.

Eastwood's movie recounts the chaotic summer night of the bombing and the swirl of confusion that followed. Within a few days, Jewell went from being hailed as a hero, for finding the bomb and reporting it to police, to becoming a prime suspect in the attack. He was cleared of suspicion after three months, and died in 2007 at age 44.

"It's always tragic when people run off with half information and don't really have the truth set up in front of them," Eastwood said. "The press is sometimes in a hurry because there's so much competition to be the first to do something."

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, a central character in the film, has disputed the paper's depiction in "Richard Jewell," saying it misrepresents their reporting on the story and their staff's actions.

In an interview alongside his

film's star, Paul Walter Hauser, Eastwood spoke with The Associated Press about his struggle to get the film made and criticisms of the film's accuracy.

The Associated Press: What were your biggest challenges with this?

Eastwood: Well, the challenge was that four-year period where the frustration of having the project all together right up to the last half an inch and then all of a sudden it fell apart — and it fell apart partly on my fault, too. You negotiate and you hit a wall. Different studios owned the property. And finally I walked away. Then this last year, I said, "I wonder whatever happened to that? And I wonder if I could reinstate it?"

How do you hope this film changes the public's perception of Richard Jewell?

Hauser: The hope with this film, other than entertaining an audience — we're still in the business of entertaining and telling a great story — but the greater picture, of course, is the echo effect it will have on the public of clearing his name to all people. And I think that this is a victory lap for the Jewell family, as much as they can have without [having] Richard here with them.

What are you most proud of in your body of work?

Eastwood: Well, I did a one-act play once when I was in high



CLAIRE FOLGER, WARNER BROS. PICTURES/AP

Director Clint Eastwood speaks with actor Paul Walter Hauser, left, during filming of "Richard Jewell."

school or junior high school, and I swore I would never do that again. I hated the idea. I was a terribly complex young kid, and the last thing I wanted to do is do an extrovert-ish thing like acting. But then when you get into acting later as an adult, you realize it's not necessarily an extroverted thing. Introverts make great actors because they have a lot of things they're holding in. It's just a question of learning how to get them out into the open. It's also a funny profession because you don't know where the next thing is happening. You try it even if it has no resemblance to you at all or anything you've ever thought of. It's a fun life, but a lot of it just so happens. Stories come along.

And stories are the king. And you go ahead and try to tell them the best you can. But it's not just an intellectual art form. It's an emotional art form.

The editor of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution has criticized the film. He's questioning the accuracy, saying it's not true that Kathy Scruggs traded sex with an ex-FBI agent in exchange for a tip. And they're also challenging the notion that the paper ran a story with questionable sourcing. Do you have a response to the criticism?

Eastwood: I think the Atlanta Journal (sic) probably would be the one group that would be sort of complex about that whole

situation because they are the ones who printed the first thing of there being a crime caused by Richard Jewell. And so they're probably looking for ways to rationalize their activity. I don't know for sure. I never discussed it with anyone from there. ...

Hauser: But also the biopics — Hollywood biopics are historically under scrutiny, whether it's the du Pont family in "Foxcatcher" or whether it's the Catholic church in "Spotlight." This is a very obvious thing that's happening with the AJC, and we understand their plight. But we're telling our story. And I think I know we did a really good job.

'Richard Jewell' takes Eastwood's libertarian ethos to questionable ends

By KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service

Sometime soon, there will be a class, book or dissertation parsing the era of late period Clint Eastwood, his cinematic fixation in the latter half of the 2010s on ripped-from-the-headlines white male American exceptionalism. The notoriously speedy auteur has churned out these films every two years starting in 2014, with the smash hit "American Sniper." He's taken on the "Miracle on the Hudson" with 2016's "Sully," and experimented with nonprofessional actors in the ghostly "The 15:17 to Paris," about American tourists thwarting a terrorist attack on a train to France. Eastwood himself starred in "The Mule" as an elderly man who gets himself into interstate drug transportation.

The thematic throughline of the films is one of individualism, heroics or success attained in spite of or against powerful outside forces and systems of control. It's a deeply libertarian ethos, which isn't surprising coming from the conservative cowboy star who might be best known as "Dirty Harry." Now he's made "Richard Jewell," about the Atlanta security guard who discovered a bomb at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics and was hailed as a hero before he was heavily scrutinized in the media as a suspect. It's a far superior film to the confounding "15:17 to Paris" and "The Mule," but it's only interesting when viewed as a part of Eastwood's oeuvre.

Likable headknot Paul Walter Hauser



WARNER BROS. PICTURES/AP

From left: Sam Rockwell, Kathy Bates and Paul Walter Hauser star in "Richard Jewell."

stars as Jewell, an overzealous law enforcement-obsessed nerd who hasn't been able to succeed in his chosen field and is only guilty of trying too hard. Eastwood could not have made the film without Hauser, who embodies a kind of innocent naivete that allows us to sympathize with him in a narrative crafted by Eastwood and writer Billy Ray. It streamlines the messy, ugly case into a morally digestible tale of good guys (well-meaning Southern boys) and bad guys (the media and also

the entire government).

In 2005, anti-abortion and anti-gay domestic terrorist Eric Rudolph confessed to the Centennial Park bombing, which claimed one life and injured 100 others, but Ray and Eastwood do not make him the bad guy in "Richard Jewell." They instead villainize the media, specifically, a reporter for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution named Kathy Scruggs (Olivia Wilde).

Ray and Eastwood lean into the ugly stereotype that female journalists are

drunken floozies who get their tips through sex. Kathy seduces the information out of Agent Tom Shaw (Jon Hamm) that the FBI (tipped off by a college dean) is investigating Jewell. Hungry for a scoop, she insists the paper run the story, and suddenly Richard and his mother, Bobi (Kathy Bates), are under the aggressive spotlight of shouting reporters and flashbulbs, all while the FBI gaslights the trusting Richard into implicating himself.

Eastwood drives home the anti-media narrative in a culminating sequence at a press conference where Bobi cries at a podium while cameras flash menacingly, and Kathy weeps at her own shame (even though the story she wrote was true).

Despite some interesting performances from Hauser, Bates and Sam Rockwell as Jewell's lawyer, the whole film just makes you wonder what message Eastwood might be trying to impart, with this film, in 2019, that essentially condemns the act of suspecting and investigating a young white man of domestic terrorism. When journalists are under physical and philosophical threat more than ever, why paint them to be the scourge, and not the actual terrorist, Eric Rudolph, who went on to claim more victims and who is absent from the film? No amount of Eastwood nostalgia can make the questionable message he tries to sell in "Richard Jewell" easier to accept.

"Richard Jewell" is rated R for strong language, including some sexual references, and brief bloody images. Running time: 131 minutes.

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

Keeping it virtually real

Playstation VR delivers fun in time for the holidays

By GIESON CACHO
The Mercury News

PlayStation VR is gaining strength as developers get a grasp of the maturing medium and create higher-quality experiences.

For the 2019 holiday season, Sony is publishing a diverse collection of VR titles that's highlighted by Stardust Odyssey and Audica. Both are full-fledged games that are built with the specification of the headset in mind. Along with that, Sony is releasing more experimental projects such as Paper Beasts, which is best described as an interactive nature walk. Meanwhile, Bonfire is a humorous short that stars Ali Wong.

I had a chance to play each of these titles at a recent event at PlayStation headquarters. Here is an overview of each one:



Audica is similar to Beat Saber, but the game from Harmonix has several differences, including guns instead of laser swords.

Audica

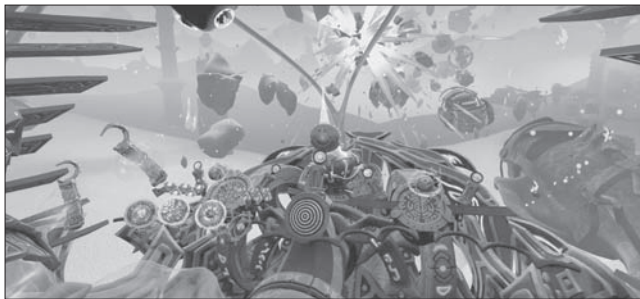
Whenever someone brings up virtual reality, Beat Saber eventually comes up. The rhythm game has had a tremendous impact in the popularity of the medium and how games are developed. Seeing the success of the game, it's no surprise that Harmonix introduced its own take on the genre, but instead of having laser swords, players arm themselves with guns. They have to shoot at targets in rhythm with the music while also accurately doing it. That's the core element of the game.

Harmonix adds other flourishes as well. In some cases, targets will fly at players and they'll have to melee them with the controller. In other instances, they'll have to hold on to the trigger for a sustained note in a song.

Another technique has players shooting sideways.

Played well, Audica can make players feel like John Wick as they nail targets with the right timing. Like its Harmonix's previous titles, Audica features a leaderboard and several difficulty modes. On the hardest mode, players have to get into a subconscious flow state as they hit targets and shift their body and line of sight to pick up on shootable objects. In addition to playing a total of 33 songs on the mostly electronic soundtrack, players have the opportunity to create their own levels for each song.

Audica is a blast to play, but whether fans will embrace it like Beat Saber remains to be seen. They can check it out for themselves now. Audica sells for \$29.99.



PHOTOS BY SONY INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT/TNS

Players pilot an ethercraft in Stardust Odyssey, one of the premiere new games for the PlayStation.

Stardust Odyssey

Agharta Studio had two goals when creating a virtual reality project. The most important of all was player comfort. They didn't want to make anyone sick while playing their game. The second was the format. They imagined their audience playing the game sitting down using two PlayStation Move controllers.

These limitations spurred the team's creativity, and they came up with Stardust Odyssey, a game that's inspired by the Silk Road. The project takes place in a fantasy world where flying caravans venture through terrain. As a smuggler, players have to steal the cargo and find relics among the voyagers. To do this, they travel aboard a magic-powered ethercraft. Players pilot the smooth- and slow-moving vehicle down linear, tunnel-like levels. Along the way, they steal items from the ships and

search for treasures such as ether cages that hold resources that upgrade the player's ship.

Stardust Odyssey is easy to play and leverages the feeling of flight without bottoming out a player's stomach. Although it looks simple, the game has plenty of depth as players pilot the ship so that it hides from Guardians protecting caravans. If they're spotted, players engage in combat by using the spells on board. In the beginning, players have two orbs of magic, and they'll be limited to a few rune upgrades, but the cargo they collect and treasure they find over the course of the 10-hour campaign opens a progression path to make the ethercraft more powerful. They can purchase power-ups using the cargo they find and that lets them handle the harder challenges ahead.

Stardust Odyssey was released Dec. 3 and sells for \$24.99. The game also includes online mode where a second player acts as a copilot.



Paper Beasts feels like a free-flowing nature game.

Paper Beasts

This is an odd game that's more like being in the middle of a nature show. Players don't receive much direction as they're thrown into a surreal world inhabited by paper creatures. As an explorer in this bizarre world, players move by pointing to a direction using the Move controllers and teleporting there. They can look around and interact with the paper beasts that wander through the world. They'll see them drink at watering holes or skitter around sand dunes. While wandering, I saw a wolflike predator attacking a gazelle-type creature. I stopped it, freed the animal and threw it in another direction, where it scampered off.

I mostly followed a giant deer-type creature as it led me

through more environments. I played around with a strange plant that grew seeds quickly, and those legumes fed animals around the area. Paper Beasts has a sandbox-type quality as players just mess around with the flora and fauna. Despite the seemingly open-ended nature, there is a kind of story to the experience. As players wander through, a black hole-type phenomenon opens up beneath players' feet and they have to flee with the other animals. Eventually, the giant deer protect the user by blocking the entrance of a cave while the world falls apart around them.

Paper Beasts is a peculiar game that could interest players looking for an unconventional experience. It's scheduled for release later this year.



Bonfire is a brief game with voice talent by Ali Wong.

Bonfire

This VR short puts players in the role of Space Scout 817. Because humans destroyed earth, players are sent across space looking for inhabitable planets. Because of some shoddy manufacturing, their pod breaks apart and they crash land on a strange planet with robot sidekick named Debbie (voiced by Ali Wong). Players survive in the alien landscape and have to make an important decision at the end.

The experience is a fun aside that doesn't last longer than 15 minutes. It has some surprisingly interactive elements as players try to survive with the robot and fend off the alien wildlife. It's not the most advance piece of AR, but it's entertaining and has heart.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Europe

Giving up the binky

Visiting Schnullerbaum encourages children to pass on the pacifier

By KARIN ZEITVOGEL
Stars and Stripes

It was a little boy I met outside my home in Kaiserslautern, Germany, who made me aware of the existence of the Schnullerbaum, a genus of tree I'd never heard of in the States. I couldn't understand what the 3-year-old was excitedly trying to tell me because he had a pacifier in his mouth. Heaving a sigh, his dad told me the family is going to the Schnullerbaum — literally a pacifier tree — in Mannheim, about an hour east of Kaiserslautern, before Christmas because Santa wanted their son to hang his pacifier on it and kick the habit.

The Schnullerbaum is a rite of passage for kids who are ready — or whose parents think they are — to stop sucking a pacifier. The tradition began in Denmark and has been embraced by Germans. There are Schnullerbaume all over Germany, including major cities like Berlin, Munich and Frankfurt, according to my research.

Mannheim's Schnullerbaum is in the Luisenpark, an expanse of green near the Neckar River where there's also a small zoo, eating establishments, a winery, a playground with a zipline, a little "train" — actually a vehicle that doesn't require a track — that will take you around the park, and gondolettas that you can poole around the lake on. Neither of the latter was running the day I was there in November, but I did see a wedding party.

The woman in the ticket booth at the entrance to the park — yes, you have to pay to get in — wasn't sure the Schnullerbaum still existed. Her grandkids had hung their pacifiers on it some time ago, she said. If it was still there, it would be down by the lake, behind the Humboldt penguins.

A 5-minute walk from the gate, I spied what looked not like a tree but a bush that had been allowed to become overgrown and unkempt — probably like the teenagers that the kids who'd hung their pacifiers on it years earlier had become. There were baby bottles in the middle of the bush and pacifiers on the inner and outer branches. Many looked like they'd been there for years, and some were obscured by dense foliage.



A plaque at the base of the Schnullerbaum in Landau, Germany, says its Latin name is *Arbor liberatae* and describes the pacifier tree as "a rare type in Western Europe." Landau's Schnullerbaum was dedicated in 2011.

It was a little disappointing, but I visited the penguins, listened to the birds, walked around and was probably happier about coming than some of the kids who've parted with their pacifier in the park.

The next day, to redeem my faith, I set out to find another Schnullerbaum near Kaiserslautern. This one was near the children's hospital in Landau and had been inaugurated in 2011 by the chief surgeon.

Bedecked with pacifiers, baby bottles and at least one Sophie the giraffe, Landau's Schnullerbaum was well worth the hour's drive over the hills south of Kaiserslautern. It caught my eye as soon as I entered the small park behind the hospital. No entry fee here, and there's even a sign pointing to the Schnullerbaum to help you find it.

A plaque at the base identified the Schnullerbaum's genus as *Arbor liberatae*, the liberating tree.

"Anyone who wants to give up their pacifier can come with their parents any time of year and add another blossom to the tree," the plaque says.

Years later, they can come back and reminisce about their childhood, it says, because unlike most tree blossoms, "Pacifiers never fade."

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PHOTOS BY KARIN ZEITVOGEL/Stars and Stripes

Baby bottles and pacifiers hang on the Schnullerbaum — literally pacifier tree — Nov. 30 in the Luisenpark in Mannheim, Germany. Children hang their pacifiers on trees as a rite of passage when they, or their parents, think it's time to kick the habit.



Left, the Schnullerbaum in Landau, Germany, is in a small park behind the children's hospital. It is festooned with pacifiers and baby bottles, right. The Schnullerbaum concept originated in Denmark and has caught on in Germany.



Visiting the Humboldt penguins at the Luisenpark in Mannheim, Germany, is a good reward for children who hang their pacifiers on the nearby Schnullerbaum.

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

Luisenpark in Mannheim is about 50 minutes east of Kaiserslautern. Put Ernst & Young in the GPS once you get to Mannheim, and the park entrance near the Schnullerbaum is opposite. There's plenty of street parking nearby. The park is also accessible by public transportation — take the number 6 or 9 tram to Luisenpark/Technomuseum.

TIMES

The park opens at 9 a.m. year-round and closes at 4:30 p.m. from November to February. In the other months, it's open until at least 6:30 p.m.

COSTS

Entrance in the winter is 4 euros for adults, 3 euros for students over 16, 2 euros for 6- to 15-year-olds, and free for 5 and under. Summer prices are roughly double that.

INFORMATION

Online: luisenpark.de
Landau's Schnullerbaum is in a small park behind the Vizen-tius Hospital, Cornichonstrasse 4, 76829 Landau in der Pfalz. Plenty of street parking nearby. There's also a Schnullerbaum in Steinwenden, near Ramstein. You'll find it at Friedhofstr. 28, 66879 Steinwenden, opposite the Siebenstark kindergarten. Access is free, and everyone is welcome to hang a pacifier on it.

— Karin Zeitvogel

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

Embracing winter's unique opportunities

Every time I travel to Europe in the offseason, I find myself enjoying a cool and comfy tranquility — and not missing the heat and crowds that so often come with peak season. But even more than that, I enjoy catching Europe by surprise — at its candid best, living everyday life. When I travel outside of the tourist season, Europe seems even more welcoming than normal.

Some of my warmest European memories have been gained while wearing a sweater in the offseason. I enjoy theater and music scenes designed for locals rather than tourists. I take my time at a chateau in France's Loire Valley, with a big log on the fire and guards relaxed and happy to chat. I sit alone on a pebbly Italian Riviera beach and step into the wonder of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome with none of the jostle. Bundle up and get convivial with Europe in the offseason and you'll understand why, for so many, that's a favorite time to travel.

There are also some practical advantages to traveling in the offseason (considered November through March). Airfare is generally cheaper. Outside of places that get lots of business travelers, hotels and Airbnb-type rentals are also less expensive.

In winter, you can usually walk right in at sights that are plagued with lines in peak season. Without having to buy advance tickets, you can often show up when you want at places like Florence's Uffizi, Paris's Orsay and Barcelona's Picasso Museum. Crowds are thinner, allowing you to enjoy Europe's treasures up close. Of course, the euro zone comes with drawbacks. Because much of Europe is at Canadian latitudes, days are short, and

it's generally dark by 5 p.m. The weather can be cold, windy, drizzly and generally dreary, and you'll need to pack heavier, including a good waterproof coat and shoes.

In winter, sightseeing priorities change. You'll probably do less meandering and exploring of neighborhoods, and more beelining to and from sights. Museums provide a warm and cozy haven, while outdoor sights can be harder to enjoy — frigid weather can drain the fun out of even the Eiffel Tower and other must-sees.

Many sights operate on shorter hours in the offseason, often closing around sunset. English-language tours, common in the summer, are not as common in the offseason, when most visitors are natives. And winter sightseeing can be especially frustrating in smaller tourist towns, where many sights and restaurants close down entirely.

Offseason is a fine time to visit big cities, which bustle year-round, as well as the Mediterranean region (Italy, Spain, Portugal, etc.), which is often horribly hot and crowded in the summer, but fairly mild in winter. While Europe's wonderful outdoor evening ambience tends to hibernate during winter in the north, it survives all year in the south. And, of course, in some places, such as Switzerland, land, winter activities — skiing, sledding and other snow sports — are an important part of the culture (and tourism).

The month leading up to Christmas is an especially fun time in Europe. German



Rick Steves



Simon Griffith/Ricksteves.com

Revelers in ornate, outrageous costumes and colorful masks descend upon Venice in February during the extravagant 18-day festival of Carnival.

towns big and small light up with Christmas markets, highlighted by carolers, festive decor, artisan ornaments and other handicrafts, and seasonal treats such as hot spiced wine. Christmas markets are also popular in Switzerland, Austria and other countries.

In London, Paris and other cities, buildings and streets dress in their holiday best, and outdoor ice rinks pop up. In Paris, hundreds of fresh-cut fir trees line the Champs-Élysées, sparkling with a dazzling display of lights. In Britain, a fun holiday tradition is the "panto" — campy

fairy-tale plays with outrageous costumes, sets, dances and audience participation.

Late winter brings more raucous revelry, when various Mardi Gras/Carnival celebrations brighten the mood throughout Europe in February. The quintessential destination is Venice, which erupts for 18 days in an extravagant festival of costumes, parties, dinners, themed parades and masquerade balls — a final debauchery before the restrictions of Lent.

Rick Steves (ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.

TOP TRAVEL PICKS

Bastogne remembers the Battle of the Bulge

In a year of commemorations marking the 75th anniversary of the World War II events, the trend continues in Belgium, where Bastogne fetes this significant number in terms of the Battle of the Bulge with its mix of traditional activities and a one-off event. What's long been referred to as "Nuts Weekend" takes place through Dec. 15.

The agenda for Saturday consists of its customary elements including a memorial walk along a grid of historical importance to the battle. Hikers can elect to cover distances of 7, 14 or 21 km along a route punctuated by static reconstructions. The walk starts at the Sports Centre on Rue Gustave Delperdange from 7 a.m.-9:30 a.m., and payment of the euro registration fee is possible just prior to setting off. The Commemorative of the Siege of Bastogne, a patriotic procession of veterans, dignitaries, Belgian and American military platoons and others, begins at 1:30 p.m. Following the placement of wreaths at the Patton and McCalliff monuments, the "Jet de Noix," or tossing of walnuts from the City Hall balcony, brings this activity to its close. Happenings at the Bastogne War Museum on the day include a book and document fair and meetings with actors,



Karen Bradbury

Read more about things to do in the Europe Traveler blog: stripes.com/blogs/europe-traveler

historians and authors, while the Bastogne Barracks is the site of static exhibitions and restored vehicles.

Sunday's agenda includes a military parade and the chance to meet with two actors from the "Band of Brothers" television series. On all days, visitors can enjoy static exhibitions, perusing stalls at which militaria is sold, take in a miniature reconstruction of the Grand-Rue of Bastogne as it appeared in 1944, or enjoy a static art exhibition.

Billed as this year's program highlight is a sound and light spectacle to be projected on the Mardasson Memorial. Presentations are scheduled for 5:30 p.m. and 8 p.m. Dec. 14. A concert by the Dixie Boys Band will follow. Entry to all activities is free. Online: bastogne75.com

Living nativity scene at Cochem Castle

The imposing Reichsburg Cochem, a castle perched high above a village by the Mosel River, makes a striking backdrop for a re-enactment of the Nativity scene.

Each year on the third Advent weekend, the story of Jesus' birth is brought to life in the castle courtyard. Actors in historical costume, accompanied by live animals, portray Mary and Joseph's search for accommodation, the archangel's announcement of the birth, and the Three Kings presentation of gifts. The 25-minute guided tour past these tableaux is presented in German only. At the end of the tour, visitors can visit a handful of market stalls and sample tasty treats.

Visiting hours are 1 p.m.-6 p.m. daily. Entry costs 6 euros for adults and 3 euros for children. Family tickets go for 16 euros. The castle's address for GPS is Schlossstrasse 36, 56812 Cochem. Online: tinyurl.com/uy6b57q

Champagne country celebrations

Epernay, a small city in the Marne department of northern France, is synonymous with Champagne, and home to some of the world's most celebrated makers of the effervescent



reichsburg-cochem.de

Reichsburg Cochem re-enacts the Nativity scene this weekend.

beverage. Through the weekend, Habits de Lumiere will brighten its days and light up its nights.

Highlights of the daytime program include cooking demos by star chefs and pairings of the dishes they create with a specific Champagne on the morning of Dec. 14 and a parade of about 400 vintage automobiles starting at 11 a.m. Dec. 15. The most vibrant of festivities takes place on the evenings of Dec. 13 and 14, when open-air bars are set up in the forecourts of the Champagne houses, light projections enliven their facades, and walking acts add a further touch of festivity along the grand Avenue de Champagne. Parades and fireworks also feature in this 20th anniversary edition of the event. Entry is free. Online: habitsdelumiere.epernay.fr

Other plans for this weekend? France's Champagne region offers events worth the trip year round. Don't miss, for example, the Joan of Arc Festival, June 6-7 in Reims, or La Route Du Champagne En Fete, Aug. 1-2 in Cote des Bar, a mix of music, Champagne sampling and cellar visits in villages of the Aube region.

Winter solstice at Stonehenge

At 11:19 p.m. Dec. 21, the winter solstice arrives in the Northern Hemisphere, marking the first day of winter. A favorite place to observe the moment is Stonehenge, in Wiltshire, England. The management of the prehistoric monument, English Heritage, welcomes visitors at first light on the morning of Dec. 22.

A parking area with limited capacity opens at 6 a.m. When the area fills up, cars will be turned away (Stonehenge's website states this happened around 7 a.m. last year). The monument field opens at 7:45 a.m., and sunrise occurs at 8:11 a.m. The walk from the Visitor Centre to the monument takes at least half an hour. A shuttle bus carries those with limited mobility. Flashlights are recommended. Access to the monument field closes at 10 a.m. Entry to Stonehenge is free. Parking costs 5 pounds. Online: tinyurl.com/vj8r9mya

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Europe



PHOTOS BY BRIAN FERGUSON/Stars and Stripes

The taco bowl at The Alamo Tex Mex Restaurant and Sports Bar in Kaiserslautern, Germany, is a treat.

Spice things up

The Alamo serves Tex-Mex that meets Texas standards

By BRIAN FERGUSON
Stars and Stripes

Germany isn't known for its Mexican food, or at least, that's the word on the street. Schnitzel and bratwurst are great, but sometimes you just want tacos, a burrito or some messy nachos.

For those in need, the Alamo Tex Mex Restaurant and Sports Bar, about a quarter mile from the Pulaski Air Base gate in Kaiserslautern, is open for business.

I would never claim to be a connoisseur of Mexican cuisine, but I did live in San Antonio for three years. I have been to plenty of restaurants that serve Mexican or Tex-Mex food in the United States. I have also been to several of these restaurants in Germany. Based on my experiences with Mexican and Tex-Mex dishes in Germany, I was not expecting anything special. I was wrong.

The American-owned restaurant was opened on Nov. 7, by Shawn Davis and Melissa Jewell, Ramstein Officer Club employees who said they saw a need for good Tex-Mex in the area.

The Alamo is large, with plenty of seating, televisions and projectors line the walls. As we stepped up to order, Jewell changed the TV station so cartoons would play for my kids. They needed a distraction so I could concentrate.

Customers order food at the counter, just like at Chipotle and Moe's: pick a dish, pick a meat, pick your toppings. My wife got a beef burrito, I got the nachos, my two kids split a quesadilla, and our friend and her son split a taco bowl.

With a full bar available, we also ordered a few margaritas to wash everything down.

Everything we ordered was great. The meat was tender, and



The margaritas even tasted like margaritas should taste.

The food at The Alamo is not only good by German standards, it's good by Texas standards.

Davis attended the Culinary Institute of America in San Antonio, while Jewell attended the Pennsylvania Institute of Culinary Arts.

The restaurant is new, so there were some issues that might confuse customers.

Currently, there is no table service, so you have to order, pay, pick up food, then sit. They only take cash, as there are problems with the card machine. If you want a drink from the bar, you might have to go to the bar.

Davis and Jewell said they are working to get more staff, and plan on offering table service once they have the people to do so. They are also trying to sort out the credit card issue. Ideally, there will be a grab-and-go side and a table service side to the restaurant, they said.

For now, the food really is good and the staff friendly, making the Alamo Tex Mex Restaurant and Sports Bar a good place to go to satisfy your taco or burrito cravings.

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The margaritas at The Alamo Tex Mex Restaurant and Sports Bar tasted like margaritas should taste, good and with alcohol.

THE ALAMO

Location: Im Haderwald 10, 67661 Kaiserslautern (Einsiedlerhof)
From Pulaski Air Base gate, drive straight and it's on the left.

Hours: Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays — 5 p.m. to 10 p.m.; Wednesdays — closed; Saturdays, Sundays — 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. breakfast, lunch and dinner. Available for party rental.

Prices: Very reasonable.
Information: Tel: 0631-75001800; Online: facebook.com/The-Alamo-Tex-Mex-Restaurant-Sports-Bar-107375317314933

— Brian Ferguson

The virtues of hand mixing

By BECKY KRYSTAL
The Washington Post

There are few pieces of kitchen equipment with as much prestige and cachet as the stand mixer. If you're a serious baker, you should have one, the conventional wisdom goes. I'm not going to disagree with that. My parents bought me my stand mixer as a gift for my first apartment more than a decade ago, and I have treasured it — and used it frequently — ever since. (My mom, meanwhile, has been using her mother's stand mixer for many decades.)

That said, it can be easy to give short shrift to its smaller cousin, the hand-held mixer, which some home cooks may prefer because of space and/or budget concerns, or if they're only an occasional baker. Whenever I publish a recipe that calls for a stand mixer, the question inevitably arises: Can I make this using a hand-held mixer?

"When I write a recipe, it's always, always on my mind," says pastry chef and cookbook author Emily Luchetti, who has tested many models of hand-held mixers over the years but has yet to fall in love with any particular one. "I want to be inclusive. I want to encourage everyone to bake."

Even though Luchetti's loyalty lies with the stand mixer, she says you can do just about everything using a hand mixer, with a few caveats and adjustments. Here's some advice on how to adapt.

Expect a difference in time. "You have to be patient with it," Luchetti says of the hand-held mixer. Beating egg whites, creaming butter and sugar together — just about everything will take longer with the small appliance. In a head-to-head test, America's Test Kitchen found that whipping whole eggs for a genoise cake took twice as long with a hand-held mixer as its stand mixer competition. (The batter from the stand mixer ended up with a higher volume, although the cakes baked up nearly identical.) Luchetti says that many recipes are written with times based on a stand mixer, which is why it's so important to pay attention to the visual cues provided in a recipe to know whether you're done.

Prepare to be more hands-on. As the name indicates, you'll be using those trusty appendages more with your hand-held mixer, and that can make things slightly more complicated. "You have to chase stuff all around the bowl," Luchetti says. Make sure you run the mixer around the edges of the bowl as well as through the center. Luchetti sometimes adds extra insurance by using a spatula to push ingredients into

the middle of the bowl and the path of the hand-held mixer.

America's Test Kitchen also found that a cookie dough ultimately came together the best when briefly kneaded by hand after using the hand mixer. Be prepared to do that if necessary. Or have a flexible spatula ready for incorporating ingredients and scraping the bowl down during mixing and at the end, which is something I do in pretty much every recipe regardless of the type of mixer used.

Play to the hand-held mixer's strengths. A stand mixer doesn't necessarily do everything better, and even if you have both, sometimes the little guy is preferable. "For smaller amounts of ingredients, such as cream for whipping, and for recipes that involve beating hot syrup into eggs or egg whites, a hand-held mixer is more practical than a stand mixer," says cookbook author Rose Levy Beranbaum in "The Baking Bible." As great as a stand mixer is, its attachments may not make enough contact with whatever is in the deep bowl if there isn't a lot of it. The portability of a hand-held mixer is a major asset when you need to beat ingredients in a bowl set over a saucepan of hot water (i.e. a double boiler) on the stovetop, such as for some sponge cake batters or a baked seven-minute frosting.

Know its limits. Need to whip a large number of egg whites or put together a heavy cookie dough? Think twice before pulling out the hand mixer, if you have a choice. Whipping large amounts of ingredients will take a very long time with a hand mixer and may not end up giving you the same amount of aeration. Moreover, the extended time can be a strain on your arm, especially with heavier models. Luchetti also says hand mixers may be too aggressive for recipes in which you want to pack the ingredients just to gently break them up, such as for a tart dough.

When it comes to power, there's no comparison between a hand-held and stand mixer. The smaller mixer can struggle with thick doughs or, worse, potentially burn out. And why a stand mixer is vastly preferable for bread dough. Some hand-held mixers do come with dough hooks these days, although, given the need to move the mixer around, I'd be worried about insufficient, uneven coverage. And attachments are nothing like the large, thick dough hook of a stand mixer) and therefore a lack of consistent kneading and gluten development. Without a stand mixer, I'd be much more inclined to start mixing the dough in a bowl with a wooden spoon before moving to the counter to knead by hand.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

Paella for one

A solo trip to Barcelona won't disappoint, even when you're watching family, friends and honeymooners sharing food and taking in Antoni Gaudi's architectural jewels

PHOTOS AND TEXT BY COURTNEY BONNELL
Associated Press

They were on girls' trips, guys' trips, family vacations and honeymoons.

They were on the train, sharing massive platters of seafood paella and packed into Antoni Gaudi's mind-bending architectural jewels.

And then there was me. The solo female traveler in Barcelona. If you're taking a solo trip for the first time, a European city like Barcelona is a good place to start. The city is dynamic, the streets and cafes are always packed, it's safe to walk around at night and people mostly speak English.

Barcelona on your own means meandering the Gothic Quarter's narrow streets or the Eixample neighborhood's high-end stores and 19th century architecture at your speed. And no judgment when you stop for gelato or churros and chocolate twice a day.

If you're planning a trip, be aware of the political conflict that's turned violent at times in Catalonia's capital. Spain's highest court sentenced leaders of a Catalan independence movement to prison last month, setting off waves of protests. I was in the city the day the ruling came down and luckily only saw peaceful protesters blocking roads and rallying with flags.

In roughly four days in Barcelona, here are some must-dos and need-to-knows for navigating the city solo.



The Palau de la Musica Catalana in Barcelona, Spain. A tour of the concert hall's colorful stained glass and mosaics is pricey but worth it, and you might even catch musicians practicing.

Eating alone

The toughest part about on-your-own journeys can be mealtime. Sit at the bar, where you can chat with the bartender and get tips from locals or other tourists.

But don't be scared away from Barcelona's patios and plazas. Cafes and bars — not the thumping-music, cruising-for-singles bars, but where most people grab tapas and wine — are everywhere and bustling.

While tapas let you sample delicacies like cod croquettes and calamari, you don't have to miss out on the paella that's usually for two or more: Chefs would make a solo serving of the rice dish.

Save most of your appetite for Spain's traditionally large lunch. The menu del dia will give you three courses and beer or wine for 10 to 20 euros.

Walk it out

Many sights are blocks apart, including Antoni Gaudi's iconic Casa Batllo and Casa Mila — his wavy, mosaic-encrusted modernist

buildings on the bustling Passeig de Gracia shopping street.

It only takes 10 minutes between his masterpiece, the unfinished Basilica de Sagrada

Familia, and the unmissable Sant Pau Recinte Modernista, a working hospital until a decade ago that was designed by Gaudi's teacher, Lluís Domènech i Montaner.

But it's going to take a couple of miles to get between those sights in the Eixample neighborhood and the older Gothic Quarter.

Sightseeing tips

First, grab a SIM card at the airport so you can Google the names of tapas and walking instructions.

One day, start at Gaudi's Park Guell and get ready to climb a hill. Part of the park is free — you can see his viaducts and gardens — but don't skip the paid area. It has a large square lined with a colorful smashed-tile bench and boasts views of the whole city.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31



Seafood paella



Above: The mountaintop monastery of Montserrat is a short train ride from Barcelona and offers spectacular views.

Left: Tourists walk along a narrow street between two old buildings in the Gothic Quarter of Barcelona.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Pacific

'Let's-a go' shopping

Nintendo Tokyo is a paradise for gamers and anime fans

By Christian Lopez

Stars and Stripes

Fans of anime and video games — especially franchises that fall under the Nintendo umbrella — are making pilgrimages to the sixth floor of the newly opened Shibuya Parco building, site of Nintendo Tokyo.

The path to "Cyberspace Shibuya" — a term coined by Parco — is marked by customers carrying shopping bags emblazoned with Nintendo's iconic red-and-white logo.

I visited about a week after it opened on Nov. 22, and lines to the sixth floor started at the ground floor of the 20-story complex.

While the floor boasts a variety of shops dedicated to Nintendo, Pokemon and Capcom, fans of Mario and Pikachu had to stand in line even longer to enter their official stores.

For hardcore gamers, it's worth the wait. Nintendo Tokyo — the company's first shop in Japan — is decorated with large statues of famous characters like Mario, Link from the Legend of Zelda and Isabelle from Animal Crossing.

Along with games and exclusive consoles, the shop sells Nintendo-themed miniatures, figurines, plushies, pillows, bags, watches, apparel and dining sets. Some items are available only in Japan.

Prices for most items range from 600 yen (just under \$6) for keychains and hand towels to more than 7,000 yen for tote bags and backpacks. A simple Nintendo Tokyo T-shirt fetches 4,800 yen.

A section of the store also has a Nintendo Switch on display so customers can try out the latest releases, such as Luigi's Mansion or Pokemon Sword and Shield (Nintendo owns the Pokemon franchise).

At the nearby Pokemon Center Shibuya, customers are greeted by a statue of a Mewtwo inside an incubation chamber. Like Nintendo Tokyo, the Pokemon shop offers a plethora of merchandise.

At a shop dedicated to Capcom — a Japanese video game maker known for titles like Street Fighter, Monster Hunter and Resident Evil — a statue of Street Fighter's Ryu greets customers with his famous Hadouken pose, in which he channels energy to shoot an opponent.

Next door, a store called Jump Shop sells merchandise from a variety of Japanese anime titles like Naruto and One Piece.

The sixth floor also hosts GG Shibuya Mobile Esports Cafe and Bar, where patrons can enjoy a drink or a meal while playing games with friends or other customers.



CHRISTIAN LOPEZ/Stars and Stripes

Customers take photos of a Mewtwo statue Dec. 1 while waiting to enter the Pokemon Center near Nintendo Tokyo in Shibuya.



CHRISTIAN LOPEZ/Stars and Stripes

Customers wait Dec. 1 to enter Nintendo Tokyo on the sixth floor of the Parco Shibuya department store in Tokyo.

Imagine a sports bar for gamers with monitors covering the walls. One very large screen, which was being used for a Street Fighter matchup during my visit, will surely host future Super Smash Bros Ultimate tournaments.

For a limited time during the holiday season, those who spend more than 5,000 yen at Nintendo Tokyo will receive a free Christmas ornament. Spend 20,000 yen or more to get the entire four-piece set.

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ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

15-1 Udagawacho, 6-F, Shibuya City, Tokyo 150-8377. About a five-minute walk from Shibuya Station's Hachiko exit.

TIMES

Open daily from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

COSTS

Admission is free.

FOOD

Aside from the sixth-floor gaming cafe and bar, Parco Shibuya has dozens of restaurants offering a variety of cuisine, including Spanish-Italian, Korean barbecue, oysters and burgers.

INFORMATION

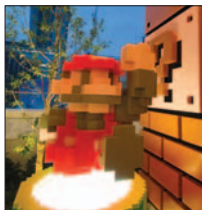
Online: www.nintendo.co.jp/officialstore/index.html

— Christian Lopez



CHRISTIAN LOPEZ/Stars and Stripes

GG Shibuya Mobile Esports Cafe and Bar near Nintendo Tokyo allows patrons to enjoy a drink or a meal while playing games with friends or other customers.



PHOTOS BY AARON KIDD/Stars and Stripes

Left, a statue of 8-bit Mario greets customers, and right, Nintendo clerks ring up purchases Nov. 28 at Nintendo Tokyo on the sixth floor of the Parco Shibuya building.

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Pacific

Steak worth barking about

Wallet-friendly menu with no bull at Bulldog Steak

By MATTHEW KEELER
Stars and Stripes

Outside temperatures have plunged in South Korea, but Bulldog Steak in Pyeongtaek is worth tackling the chill city breeze for a delicious meal.

Restaurant owner and chef Ryu Suck Hyeon offers guests a very simple menu at Bulldog, which is tucked away near the city's Tong Bok Market.

Each steak entree features a 5- to 6-ounce chunk of U.S. beef served with a house sauce, and a small salad with slices of pineapple, mushrooms and pickles.

A few tables and chairs stand outside as this location was originally a carry-out restaurant. However, since opening Bulldog in 2017, chef Suck Hyeon has converted an area just behind his kitchen into a climate-controlled dining area where you will be seated after placing your order.

To my delight the English-speaking chef cooks each steak to a medium doneness. However, if you prefer your steak rare or well done, just let him know when ordering.

After no more than 15 minutes, my shrimp and steak entree was brought to the table along with a small cup of rice and cheese bread that I couldn't get enough of. The soft, airy and perfectly hot, melted cheese blend got my taste buds active, making the steak even more appealing.

The plate presentation showed how much the chef appreciates not just his food, but also the customer.

At 14,000 won (about \$12), my steak, salad and four-piece shrimp combo looked like a first-class luxury. The meat was cooked to perfection, as expected. Although I feel comfortable saying the steak was not seasoned, or very little, the house sauce complemented the steak



PHOTOS BY MATTHEW KEELER/Stars and Stripes

The shrimp-and-steak combo from Bulldog Steak in Pyeongtaek, South Korea, features a house sauce that is sure to be a hit with many diners.



AFTER HOURS SOUTH KOREA

exceptionally well. I would have purchased a bottle to take home if that had been an option.

The shrimp itself was well done, but unseasoned. A pinch of salt or lemon would have gotten me a little more excited, but I was pleased with the combo. The portions were balanced and filling.

The potato steak entree (13,000 won) is a steak and french fries combo. These crispy fries were seasoned with salt, parsley and grated cheese, and great for filling the remaining void in your stomach after the cheese bread and salad.

Other menu items include



Bulldog Steak offers both indoor and outdoor seating.

beef and seafood entrees with rice that start at 8,000 won (\$7). The cheese bread is 5,000 won for four additional pieces, and a stand-alone basket of seasoned fries is 6,000 won. Draft and bottled beer is also on hand starting at 3,500 won.

The various vendors within

Tong Bok Market are enough to lure a crowd. But at less than a half-mile from Pyeongtaek Station, or AK Plaza, Bulldog Steak is an easy choice. You simply can't go wrong with any of the steak combos offered.

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BULLDOG STEAK

Location: 95-31, Tongbok-dong, Pyeongtaek-si, Gyeonggi-do. GPS 36.996653, 127.12950

Hours: 11 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday; closed Monday

Prices: Steak entrees range from 11,000 to 14,000 won;

Rice entrees range from 8,000 to 9,000 won

Dress: Casual

Directions: Less than a half-mile from the Pyeongtaek train station; walking or a taxi best; paid parking nearby.

Information: 031-656-1011

— Matthew Keeler

Kuala Lumpur restaurant caters to people who love airplane food

By HANNAH SAMPSON
The Washington Post

Just what everyone thinks when they're digging into an airline meal: Man, I wish I could order this even when I'm not flying.

At least that's how AirAsia, a low-cost carrier based in Malaysia, hopes its customers feel. This month, the airline opened the first restaurant inspired by its in-flight food offerings at a mall in Kuala Lumpur. Executives have ambitious plans for expansion, with a goal of opening five owned restaurants and 100 operated by franchisees "in global markets" in the next three to five years.

"Our dream is to have one in Times Square," AirAsia Group CEO Tony Fernandes told Reuters.

The restaurant, Santan, is named after coconut milk in Malaysia; that is also the name of the airline's in-flight menu brand. It opened in conjunction with T&Co, a cafe. Catherine Goh, general manager of Santan and T&Co, told Reuters that 30 percent of the restaurant menu comes from the menu that is served in the air.

"We have seen a significant appetite for our in-flight menu offerings beyond our flights across the region, and this is our answer to that demand," she said in an announcement. "We were very proud to extend what we started out as an in-flight menu into new markets and reiterate our support for local and Asean producers, suppliers;



AirAsia

Thai basil chicken with rice, left, and Nyonya curry laksa from the restaurant Santan.

apart from creating new job opportunities with affordable franchising."

Dishes that airline passengers might recognize include "Pak Nasser's Nasi Lemak," described as a coconut

rice dish with chile sauce and a chicken stew. The meal includes fried anchovies, half a hard-boiled egg and nuts. Also on the Santan menu: "Uncle Chin's Chicken Rice," with roast chicken, seasoned rice and chile and ginger soy sauces. Meals hail from countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, including Cambodia, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines, and cost about 12 Malaysian ringgit (or about \$2.90).

"It will bring people together through our shared love for ASEAN food under one roof and on a flight," Fernandes wrote in a LinkedIn post in September.

For years, airlines have consulted with celebrity chefs to spruce up their in-air menus. But taking inspiration from the air to the ground is less common. Thai Airways' catering arm operates four restaurants, all at airports in Thailand.

But AirAsia's CEO wants to reach way beyond air travelers. He hopes the restaurant will ultimately compete with American fast-food chains.

"A year ago, when I first conjured the idea of turning Santan and T&Co, our in-flight food choices, into a fast-food restaurant, everyone thought I was crazy," he wrote in the LinkedIn post. "Just as they thought 18 years ago when I said I was starting an airline. Look how that turned out!"

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Boarding pass optional

Shop, dine at some airports without paying for a ticket

By HANNAH SAMPSON
The Washington Post

Christina Cassotis used to hear the same question whenever she went to public events:

Why can't we go hang out at the airport like we did in the old days? "We would hear people say, 'I wish I could get over there; I'd like to have dinner; I'd like to shop; I'd like to greet my daughter when she comes off the plane with my new grandson,'" says Cassotis, CEO of the Allegheny County Airport Authority, which includes Pittsburgh International Airport. "It was among the top five questions at every single event, bar none. It got to the point where it was like, why can't we do that?"

After consulting the Department of Homeland Security and Transportation Security Administration, the airport set up "myPTPass," a program that makes it possible for people who don't have a boarding pass to visit shops, restaurants and gates past security checkpoints.

Pittsburgh, a one-time hub for US Airways, introduced the program in September 2017, and about 40,000 people have taken advantage so far. Seattle-Tacoma International Airport piloted its own version for six weeks in late 2018 and saw 1,100 people visit, though authorities have not decided whether to bring it back permanently.

Since then, Tampa International Airport added the "TPA All Access" program in May and has since expanded to allow more people to visit. Detroit Metro Airport recently introduced the "DTW Destination Pass," a pilot that runs through Jan. 5. And others such as Austin-Bergstrom International Airport have said they are considering the possibility. Bloomberg called the concept "terminal tourism."

But wait a second. These are airports. Why would anyone voluntarily spend time at them, especially with a TSA screening required? Airport executives say they hear several reasons from people who participate, including meeting a loved one at the gate when they arrive or seeing them off, shop-

ping, eating at restaurants or just passing time plane-spotting with kids.

At Tampa International Airport, one dining establishment in particular has proven popular: "We have the only Potbelly Sandwich Shop in the state of Florida," says airport spokeswoman Emily Nipps. "We knew Potbelly would be popular, but I mean, it's a sub shop."

She said the airport also has versions of well-known local favorites like Ulele and Columbia Restaurant Cafe — places that are popular enough to lure some people for date night among the suitcase crowd.

That's a direction more airports have been moving in — and many are eager to display their offerings, says Colleen Chamberlain, vice president of trans-

wouldn't have been novel before the Sept. 11 attacks. There was still security screening back then, but a boarding pass wasn't necessarily required to go through, Chamberlain says.

Long before myPTPass, a handful of airports including Pittsburgh and Detroit made arrangements with TSA so guests at specific airport hotels could go through security checkpoints and eat at airport restaurants even if they didn't have boarding passes. Pittsburgh also started an annual holiday open house in 2014 to allow people without boarding passes to visit.

"In terms of the bigger trend, it's definitely one that has enough sustained interest by airports that TSA has put sort of a regulatory policy in place for

‘There's a real focus now of creating a sense of place at the airport so you're not just on gray chairs with white walls.’

Colleen Chamberlain

Vice president of transportation security policy at the American Association of Airport Executives

portation security policy at the American Association of Airport Executives.

"There's a real focus now of creating a sense of place at the airport so you're not just on gray chairs with white walls," she says.

An unabashed airport fan, Chamberlain added: "It's an airport; what's cooler than watching planes come in and take off?"

For Matt Garland, a bit of a self-described aviation geek who lives near Pittsburgh, it was the perfect activity for an afternoon last year with his kids Nathaniel, 5, at the time, and Evangeline, who was almost 3. They saw a giant display of a Tyrannosaurus Rex skeleton, a massive Transformer-like sculpture and a robot repair shop that's actually an art installation.

"It's nice to be able to go, especially if you're into aviation," says Garland, who works in strategic planning for Deloitte Consulting. "It's nice to be able to show the kids that as well, especially since I travel a decent amount."

The experience he and his kids had

airports that are interested in doing these type of programs," Chamberlain says. "It's not a one-off anymore."

Any airport can decide to welcome non-ticketed passengers, says Jenny Burke, a TSA spokeswoman.

"It's really up to the individual airport to decide if they want to pursue," she says. "As part of that, TSA works with the airport authority to design the program that's going to allow the access to the shopping on the sterile side of the airport without affecting the flow of screening procedures for those who are traveling."

Each airport that offers access has a slightly different setup. Some set a maximum number of visitors a day, and all limit access to off-peak times. Everyone is subject to the same TSA rules as passengers, and should expect ticketed passengers to get priority if long lines form.

In Tampa, passes are only available to 150 people from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m. on Saturday, a slower traffic day. Nipps says about 2,600 have used the

passes so far, and the program may be expanded to include more days. Visitors have to sign up at least 24 hours in advance, choose the section they want to visit, show photo identification in person to get a physical pass and then go through security just like any passenger.

"People love it," Nipps says. "There's not really any downside to it. It's not really taxing on our TSA lines or restaurants and shops."

At Detroit Metro Airport, where hotel guests at the airport Westin have been able to access the airport for nearly 13 years, the new pilot program allows no more than 75 people a day to use the DTW Destination Pass from 8 a.m. through 8 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. Mondays are the airport's busiest, so they made that day off limits.

People have to apply the day before they want to visit and, if approved, show a government ID to get the pass before going through security. Security chief Debra Sieg said that TSA screens about 40,000 passengers a day, so adding another 75 "doesn't even move the needle for them."

Sieg said registration had maxed out every day of October, the most recent month she had statistics for, though not everyone ultimately shows up. Surveys have shown that the primary reason for using the program is meeting someone who is arriving or going to the gate with someone who is departing, followed by wanting to eat or shop.

"Some of the responses we are getting back is they are spending money," Sieg says. "Which, for us, is important, but not our primary motivation."

Pittsburgh International Airport doesn't require sign-up in advance, and its program is only in effect from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Visitors have to bring government-issued identification to the designated myPTPass ticket counter, where their names are run against a no-fly list. Then they head through security.

Cassotis, the airport authority CEO, says she doesn't think the trend makes sense for every airport. But she's confident it's working for hers.

"People in Pittsburgh are very proud of the airport."



ILLUSTRATION BY
NOGA AMI-RAV
Stars and Stripes

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Duty-free due diligence

Maximize savings at airport shops with a few tips

BY NATALIE B. COMPTON

The Washington Post

Shannon, Ireland, population 10,000, is a great jumping-off point for travelers heading to Limerick or the Cliffs of Moher. It's also the birthplace of a \$68.6 billion industry: duty-free shops. Shannon Airport opened the world's first such store in 1974, offering people passing through the western part of the country the opportunity to shop without paying taxes before they left.

"To spawn what has become a global, multibillion-dollar industry is something that we're very proud of," says Darren Smyth, head of commercial operations at Shannon Airport. "Everybody the world over likes to feel like they're getting good value."

What Shannon started became an international phenomenon. Anyone who's traveled internationally — by plane, cruise, ferry or overland — has probably encountered duty-free shopping. While many travelers are familiar with the concept, it can still be confusing in terms of value. You know you're not paying local tax on items like cosmetics, cigarettes, sunglasses and spirits, but are buying goods here really a better deal than elsewhere?

Depends on what you consider a deal. When the Shannon Airport launched duty-free, a lower price thanks to the nixed tax was the key selling point. Today, duty-free shopping's appeal is more complex. Now that we can comparison-shop for deals online for just about anything, duty-free shops had to come up with new ways to entice customers. Here's what you need to know before you head to the airport.

1. The real savings are in alcohol. The best deals at duty-free will depend on the taxes where you live; the better the tax on a product, the better the deal at duty-free. Around the world, "sin taxes" tend to be a common practice, making "sinful" products your best buy.

"The heaviest-taxed areas of all our lives are things like liquor and tobacco products," says Tony Richardson, founder of Duty-Free Hunter, an online shopping guide for travelers. "They naturally are going to have the biggest savings, because you're escaping either duty or sales tax, or both, depending on the regime in a particular country."

Sales of booze at duty-free stores are so strong that companies will send brand ambassadors to airports to hold tastings and food-pairing sessions to get more eyes on their merchandise. Mumbai Duty-Free, at Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport, even hosts an annual whiskey week.

"Every shop now, they are trying to create a bit of an experi-

ence as well," Richardson says. "What we've seen in the industry is the retailers and the big brands trying to create a sort of unmissable factor."

2. If you're in the market for makeup, look for freebies. Cosmetics brands sweeten deals by creating special travel-size versions of popular items or offering freebies with purchases as a perk, Smyth says. Your standard-size lipstick may cost about what you'd pay at home, but at duty-free, the brand may throw in an extra gift.

"It's useful in terms of maximizing the value at a duty-free," Smyth says.

The sales associates will be the most up-to-date on brand promotions, so ask them about potential gifts with purchase before you start browsing. You can also go online to Duty-Free Hunter or, for travelers going to the U.K. or Germany, World Duty-Free, to find news on travel retail sales.

3. Find items you can't buy anywhere else, especially spirits. For some brands, making limited-edition items available only in duty-free stores is a

way to reel in new and existing customers.

"What you've seen more and more is the use of exclusives," Richardson says. "There will be certain perfumes or drinks brands in particular that you can only get when you travel. Johnnie Walker will create a whiskey that is only available in certain airports, so that way they're giving travelers a reason to make sure they go in the shop."

Spirits brands, for example, may release multi-bottle series for these stores to tempt spirit connoisseurs. Like playing Pokemon, you may be compelled to try to catch them all.

"The idea for now is that we need to offer passengers something different that you can't ordinarily get," says Manoj Riyait, head of marketing for Global Travel Retail at William Grant & Sons Global Brands, the independent spirits company responsible for brands like Glenfiddich, Balvenie and Hendrick's gin. Scoring a bottle at duty-free that you can't get at liquor stores, like the Balvenie Triple Cask range, can be a huge win for collectors

who already have staples from a spirits company's core range.

Booze companies aren't the only ones to make moves like this. Cosmetics companies and fashion labels are also known to release travel-retail exclusives. For example, the French fashion brand Chloe just released a four-piece capsule collection for DFS, a luxury travel retailer with duty-free shops in 11 major airports.

4. Candy is a nice present, but you won't save cash on it. Even though candy makes up a large chunk of real estate in duty-free stores, it's not there because it's a fantastic deal only found past the security checkpoint.

"With confectionery, there isn't a huge saving, because the price points are much smaller," Richardson says.

He says prices on sweets will vary where you go around the world due to local market factors, so you may be able to find Tollerone cheaper than you would at home. The biggest perk of buying desserts at duty-free is that they're an easy last-minute gift

idea. Many candy brands will stock the shops with packages that are ready to be presented as gifts.

5. Take advantage of international brands you can't find at home. Duty-free stores study their customer base's demographics and fill their shelves with items craved to appeal to groups traveling through certain airports. That means fliers may encounter products they wouldn't normally at their hometown mall.

"You might see Asian brands that you can't get anywhere else in America, but you can get them at the San Francisco airport, because there's a demographic traveling through there that they need to service," Richardson says.

6. Skip the sunglasses. As with chocolates and candy, the most persuasive case for shopping for sunglasses at the airport is the convenience. If you forgot your Ray-Bans at home while en route to Cancun, at least you can get some before you hop on the plane. Richardson isn't sold on buying shades at duty-free for cost purposes, though, saying there's no massive bargain.

"You may get exclusive lines, but they'll be minimal in terms of saving," he says. "If you dig around on the internet, I would think you'd find them for the same sort of price."

7. Research, because some items may not be cheaper at duty-free at all. Retailers may offer higher discounts in some markets than in others. For example, a bottle of Lagavulin 16-year-old Scotch whisky at Singapore's Changi Airport runs for the equivalent of about \$90 U.S., while it can be had for only \$60 U.S. at London Heathrow. Sometimes prices vary within a single airport. According to findings from the Points Guy's research, duty-free prices may even differ from terminal to terminal. If you have time before your flight, it may be in your best interest to compare prices among different concourses. But calculating whether an item at duty-free is less expensive than it is elsewhere is a complicated dance.

"Trying to compare savings between, say, Singapore and New York is near impossible, because there are so many factors at play," Richardson says. "It has so much to do with where you're shopping in the world."

If you have brands in mind you're hoping to shop for at the airport, Smyth recommends taking the time to note how much you normally pay for those brands before you leave for your trip.

"Do research and give yourself time to understand what the offer is. Then you can maximize the value," Smyth says.



WEEKEND: MUSIC

Capturing magic in 4 days

John Hiatt looks back on his career with no thoughts of retiring

By DAVID BAUDER
Associated Press

John Hiatt wrote his first song at age 11, and knew right away that's what he wanted to do. It's not his job; it's who he is. He's 67 now.

With all that time put in, it's amusing that the two albums that are arguably the cornerstones of his career — 1987's "Bring the Family" and 2000's "Crossing Muddy Waters" — were both recorded in only four days.

"Bring the Family," his eighth album, was made in Los Angeles' Ocean Way Studio with Ry Cooder, Nick Lowe and Jim Keltner, and lifted Hiatt beyond clubs where he'd been performing for one or two dozen people. It contains "Thing Called Love," the song Bonnie Raitt later made a hit, and the standard "Have a Little Faith in Me." "Crossing Muddy

Waters," his 15th album, was an acoustic disc recorded in a Tennessee home studio and set him on a DIY course he follows today. Besides the title cut, it includes "Only the Song Survives," which is the title for his latest project, a big box set that collects 15 of his albums on vinyl and was released Dec. 6.

Four days. The lesson? "Let's play and capture the magic," he said. "That's kind of the approach I've used ever since. I don't think I've ever spent more than a couple of weeks on a record."

He has a daughter, Lilly, who's making her own way in the business ("she's kind of scary good, in my humble opinion") and is looking ahead to new music with Cooder. But he recently sat down with The Associated Press to take a look back.

AP: When I was pitched this project, I wondered if this wasn't some sort of retirement thing.

Hiatt: I'm not resting on my laurels. They're too shaky. Is retirement something you've ever given thought to?

Not really. Slowing down, yeah. Being at home more with my wife after 33 years of marriage and most of them spent apart. We just realized that over the last few years, in fact. And I have slowed down from more than 120 shows a year to between 60 and 75. So I'm home more. It was great in one respect; it was like dating again. In another respect, it was like, 'who the hell are you?' So we had to learn how to spend more time together.

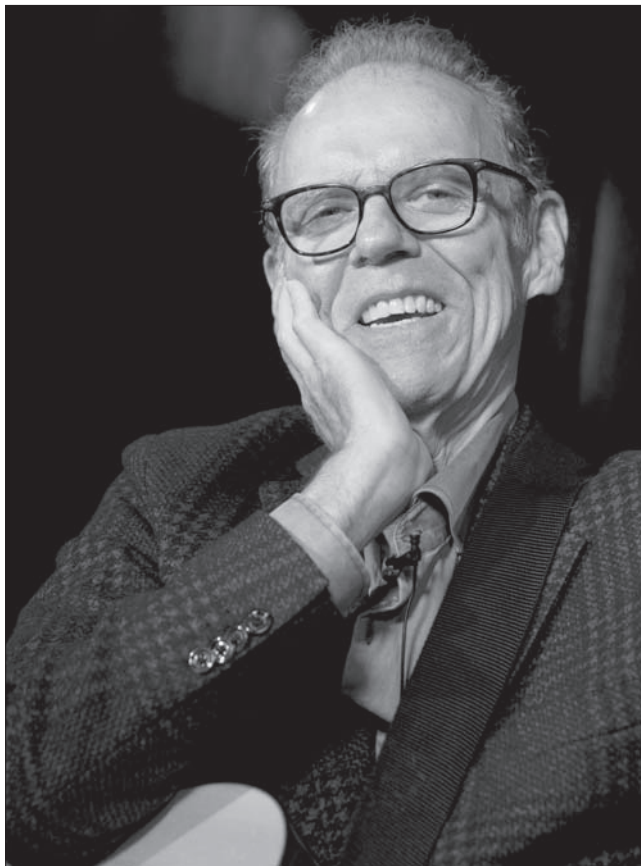
Your song "Robber's High-

way" (about a singer at the tail end of a career) makes someone wonder about the cost of doing it for so long.

The beauty, of course, the wonderful thing about it, is playing. B.B. King, I think he said, you don't pay us for the two hours we play, you pay us for the other 22. That's the rub of being a troubadour. It's the travel that kills you, and breaks hearts and destroys relationships and gets you into all sorts of ancillary trouble, potentially, especially when you're young. At the end of the day, this is my life. This is what I signed up to do.

How is songwriting different now from when you were younger?

I've gone through so many periods where the flow of it changes



RICHARD DREW/AP

Singer-songwriter John Hiatt promotes his box set "Only the Song Survives" on Oct. 11 in New York.

... They come a little slower now, and I assume it's because I'm older.

Is it because of high standards?

I don't know about that! My standards have always been pretty lax. Tom Petty used to call songwriting, "getting one in the boat," like you're fishing: We got another one in the boat, boys. I feel that way about a song. Any way I can get one into the boat, I'm happy.

Are you inspired by colleagues

like Bob Dylan and Paul Simon, who continue to push barriers as they get older?

My goodness, yes. It's hope for us all. Van Morrison's making great records. He's singing better than ever. The list goes on. There are so many artists who get a second, third and fourth wind as they age.

What would you say characterizes the work that's in this box set?

Starting in 2000, I kind of had a rebirth with "Crossing Muddy

Waters.' It kind of got my attention in terms of where I might be headed as a singer-songwriter. I think that set the tone. I had been playing with a rock band, rockin' pretty hard through the 1990s, and I had these songs, they were acoustic stuff, and I thought I should record it close to how I created it.

How would you like your body of work to be remembered?

A kid from the Midwest who tried to tell it straight. What else can you do?

'Let's play and capture the magic. That's kind of the approach I've used ever since. I don't think I've ever spent more than a couple of weeks on a record.'

John Hiatt
Singer-songwriter

WEEKEND: MUSIC

Two directions

Former 1D members release new albums with strikingly different results

Liam Payne

LP1 (Capitol)

One Direction fans have reason to rejoice this holiday season: They get not just one, but two full albums from former members — Liam Payne and Harry Styles. Unfortunately for one of them, the reception will be frosty.

Payne's 17-track "LP1" never really gets off the ground, a collection of monotonous club songs that often sound like warmed-over Justin Bieber rejects. It doesn't help that some of the offerings are more than two years old.

The first tune — "Stack It Up" with A Boogie Wit da Hoodie — is the best, and then the album falls off a cliff into a swamp of skittering drums, synth and libidinous lyrics ("Flippin' that body/Go head, I'll go tails"). It breaks no new sonic ground and has a faintly musty whiff. (Weirdly, Payne finally stops grinding for a weepy original Christmas song at the very end.)

There's a good reason for the first tune being good: it's co-written by Ed Sheeran and Payne doesn't try to disguise its origins, mimicking Sheeran vocal tics and flow. For a first album, Payne surprisingly doesn't show up: He had a hand co-writing only four songs and fails to do anything interesting with his voice.

While Styles is off making fascinating, intriguing music, Payne is clearly phoning in his debut from the club. He sounds happiest on "Both Ways," when he boasts about his girlfriend's bisexuality. "I don't discriminate/Bring it back to my place/Yeah she like it both ways."

The album reaches ludicrous heights on "Strip That Down," a two-year-old embarrassment that credits no fewer than 15 writers, including Sheeran, Quavo and even Shaggy, since they've lifted so much of his 19-year-old hit "It Wasn't Me."

"You know I used to be in 1D (Now I'm out free)" Payne sings on it.

The sound of freedom never sounded so banal.

— Mark Kennedy
Associated Press



Tim Walker

Harry Styles looks stylish during a photo shoot to promote his new album, "Fine Line."

Harry Styles

Fine Line (Columbia)

Arriving just in time to mess up everyone's best-of-the-year music lists is Harry Styles' sophomore album, "Fine Line." The former One Direction member richly deserves a spot on yours.

The 12-track album continues Styles' tour through his musical influences — his salute to rock royalty — and yet also shows signs that he's coming up with his own sound. "Shine, step into the light," he sings. It is advice he is also taking.

The men of One Direction are each taking their own direction, but Styles'



proves the most ambitious (Take notes, Liam Payne). He's co-written every song and also adds guitar, dulcimer and supplies backing vocals.

Styles has reunited with producers Jeff Bhasker, Tyler Johnson and Kid Harpoon, who helped mold his sound on his first album. And the singles released so far — the psychedelic foot-stomper "Watermelon Sugar," the soaring, soulful "Lights Up" and the blissful poppy "Adore You" — are all different and great.

There's also the Queen-ish "Treat People with Kindness," which is a cheerful, funky slice of '70s, with hand-claps, tambourine and Styles trading verses with a choir. ("All together now!" he asks.) The most challenging song is "She," which has a Lennon-McCartney vibe, grinding guitar and crazy keys. Lyrically, it's a cousin to "Eleanor Rigby."

Sometimes, the album feels like a game of Guess the Influence. "Canyon Moon"? Bob Dylan. "Golden"? Beach Boys, right? "She"? A bit of Santana. But Styles' references are lighter this time than on his debut. He's less aping his heroes than just using some of their colors.

There are call-backs to his first album. That had the song "Kiwi" and the new one has more luscious fruits — strawberries, cherry and that watermelon. The song "Falling" once again finds Styles alone in bed with wandering hands, where he was unhappy on "From the Dining Table" from 2017.

Love — mostly its absence — is the lyrical bedrock, with Styles showing his lonely, brokenhearted side. "Don't call me 'baby' again," he asks an ex in one song. "Don't call him 'baby,'" he asks in another. "Cherry" seems to be about his French former flame. "I just miss your accent," he sings, and the songs end with a woman's voice cooing in French. (The title may be a joke on "cherie.")

"I'm well aware I write too many songs about you," he writes in the piano-driven ballad "Falling."

The moody, string-based "Fine Line" ends the album, another song about the push-pull of former flames and broken things. But it concludes with hope: "We'll be alright." If he keeps making music like this, we all will be.

— Mark Kennedy
Associated Press

WEEKEND: BOOKS

Questlove's ultimate potluck dinner party

Musician shares event planning advice, recipes of famous friends in cookbook

By MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

If you're lucky enough to be invited to a dinner party hosted by Questlove, be aware that nothing has been left to chance.

The guest list has been carefully chosen, as have all the dishes. The music starts off with piano-heavy tunes and then builds as the evening goes on. The amount and quality of the booze is also carefully staged.

"I think now I have it down to a science. You have to start off mellow and go to your climax," said Questlove. "Usually my parties start at 7 o'clock. By 10 o'clock, it's at its height. And then when it's filtering out around 12:30, then usually the 10 of us left go out to get pizzas and burgers."

If you're one of the stragglers, there's a good chance you'll be hanging with a celebrity. Questlove attracts an eclectic fanbase, from musicians like Q-Tip and David Byrne, to foodies like Padma Lakshmi and Eric Ripert, to actresses like Gabrielle Union and Zooey Deschanel, and artists like Tom Sachs and Dustin Yellin.

Now the drummer of the hip-hop group The Roots, as well as a DJ, a producer, author and radio host is revealing some of the secrets in his new book, "Mixtape Potluck." It includes crowd-pleasing recipes from more than 50 friends and advice on how to organize the music, food and guests.

"For me, the whole goal of 'Mixtape Potluck' is to serve as a guide to have better social functions. Oftentimes, I meet artists that are islands in their own and I tell them all the time, 'Find your flock; gather your flock,'" he said. "We live in such a singular society now that really doesn't encourage the idea of collaboration or even social gatherings anymore."

The hope is that the party's guests will

mingle and learn about each other, sparking partnerships and alliances. He likens it to high-level speed dating.

"For me, the recipe is when people the next day say, 'I exchanged numbers with this particular artist or this particular singer, this particular writer or this particular architect, and now we're going to work and collaborate together,'" he said.

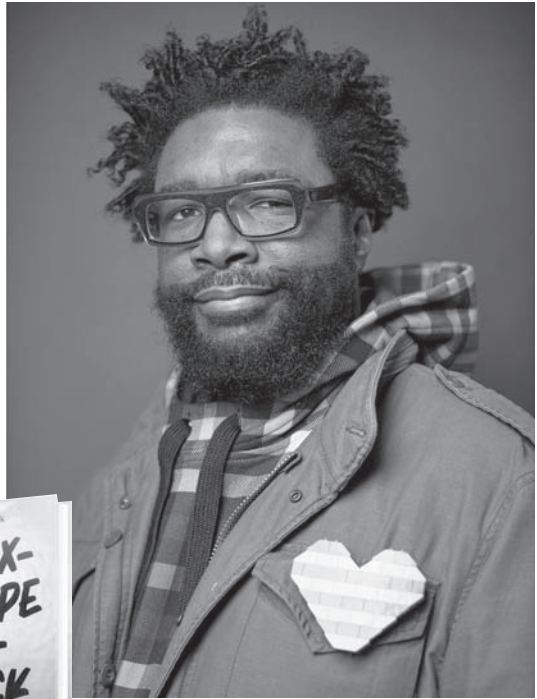
Included in the book is Marisa Tomei's grandmother's recipe for charred red peppers, Jessica Biel's blueberry cake and a mac and cheese from Q-Tip.

Questlove, born Ahmir Thompson, said the seed of the book sprouted more than 20 years ago when The Roots were trying to lure musicians to collaborate in Philadelphia. The best brite turned out to be food, "the proverbial pie on the windowsill that drew everyone in." They even convinced their record label to add a chef to the budget.

"For me, music and food and creatives go hand-in-hand. So, some 20-plus years, later, I just now call them food souls. And instead of using food to attract musicians to create music, I'm kind of doing the opposite where music is now in the background."

To inspire his "Mixtape Potluck" celebrities on picking out their recipes, Questlove sent along a song that he felt best captured their unique creative energy. Martha Stewart got a Snoop Dogg tune, while vegetarian Natalie Portman got "Vegetables" by The Beach Boys.

Jimmy Fallon, who works with The Roots on "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon," got Bruce Springsteen's



ABRAMS/AP

Roots drummer Questlove shares his secrets to hosting a perfect dinner party in his new book "Mixtape Potluck."

"Hungry Heart" and, in turn, offered his recipe for air-fried chicken burgers. "Giving him a Bruce Springsteen song is very easy because in his heart, there's a Jersey boy dying to come out in Jimmy Fallon's soul."

Questlove relied on his astounding knowledge of music. He admits to being a little ADD and is obsessed with making lists. He has dozens of Spotify playlists and challenges himself to compile things like 100 songs about the color blue or 100

songs in which the title is never sung. His deep insight has led him to produce the AMC show "Hip Hop: The Songs That Shook America."

In many ways, although Questlove doesn't really cook himself, he assembles the ingredients for a good party like any good chef — music, chefs, lighting, drinks and guests. "I'm not into randomness and throw the noodle at the wall and see what sticks, because often that can be a disaster," he said.

Missions and mythmaking from a former Navy SEAL in 'Sea Stories'

By ELLIOT ACKERMAN
Special To The Washington Post

Over the past decade, Navy SEALs have delivered several films and books into our culture. The latest offering is "Sea Stories: My Life in Special Operations" by retired Adm. William H. McRaven, a series of vignettes spanning the officer's boyhood to his retirement in 2014.

McRaven, most known for his key role in the planning and execution of the raid that resulted in the death of Osama bin Laden, has long been a towering figure in the Special Operations community. This is his third book; his second, the best-seller "Make Your Bed: Little Things That Can Change Your Life ... and Maybe the World," was based on a commencement speech he



delivered at the University of Texas. His first, "Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare: Theory and Practice," came out in 1995 and offered analytical lessons from key commando raids throughout history. Among his readers in the Special Operations community, it's considered a classic theoretical text.

"Sea Stories" combines certain elements of "Spec Ops" with the wisdom so colloquially articulated in "Make Your Bed." In the second chapter, McRaven shares a story from his youth: He and

a pair of friends attempted to break into an ammunition storage depot on the base where he lived with his mother and fighter pilot father. His friends were terrified, but McRaven rallied the budding commandos throughout their raid. "As I started to ease my body over the final strand of barbed wire, my Roy Rogers pearl-handled six shooter fell from my holster onto the ground below. I looked at Billy and then down toward the pistol. 'C'mon! We gotta go!' Billy screamed."

McRaven then describes his successful navigation over the wire and how he evaded the alerted military police. When his pistol was later discovered, the father asked him, "Do you know anything about this?" McRaven writes: "And then, for the first and last time in my life, I lied to

my father: 'No sir; I said.'"

The anecdote is Washingtonesque in its I-chopped-down-the-cherry-tree tone of mythmaking. And this is the book's weakness. You can't help but wonder how much these vignettes are aiming for truth and how much they are aiming for something else.

McRaven writes with great feeling about his remarkable career and the pivotal role he played in many complex commando missions, like the rescue of Martin and Garin Burnham, a married missionary couple held hostage by Islamic militants in the Philippines. The strongest writing in the book is occasionally undermined by that "something else," which feels like unnecessary SEAL mythmaking. In reference to the Burnhams' weakened physical condition,

a colleague of McRaven's said, "They're missionaries, for God's sake, not Navy SEALs." And McRaven replied, "They may not be SEALs, but what I do know is that their faith is strong."

At times, McRaven alludes to parts of his life and career that contain complexity and, probably, truth, such as his premature relief from command of a SEAL squadron; however, he never discloses the details of that professional low.

McRaven could have written about what isn't working in the SEAL teams. He could have touched on the emotional costs veterans pay for two decades of unending war. A choice to address the complexity and humanity of the community would have been truly powerful for being unique and new.

WEEKEND: TELEVISION & DVD

NEW ON DVD

Downton Abbey: Amid uncertain times at home and across the pond, it's a fine time for some good old-fashioned escapist drama. (And it's always the right time for the brilliantly sardonic Maggie Smith as Dowager Countess Violet Crawley.) Following the hit TV show's six seasons, the film announces some important visitors to the estate: King George V and Queen Mary. As the Crawley family prepares for the visit, the servants discover that the royals travel with their own staff and concoct a scheme.

Fans of the series would likely be pleased by the fan service-heavy movie, though there's not much else to it, wrote Chicago Tribune critic Michael Phillips in his review.

"It's fun, for a while, to see the gang back together in 'Downton Abbey,' with nearly two dozen rotating characters played by actors whose eyes twinkle with confidence," wrote Phillips. "As long-form storytelling, the 'Downton Abbey' TV show certainly did the trick for millions, though without developing the dramatic impact or subtlety of character found in one of its clearest influences, 'Upstairs Downstairs.'"

Abominable: In this computer-animated film, teenage Yi (voiced by Chloe Bennet) and her friends (Albert Tsai and Tenzing Norgye Trainor) discover a Yeti and set out on a treacherous journey to return him safely to his family. Meanwhile, a scheming businessman (Eddie Izzard) and zoologist (Sarah Paulson) attempt to thwart the teenagers' efforts and kidnap the creature for themselves.

Not only does the film take a refreshing tone with its nuanced protagonists, it also breathes new life into the quintessential concept of the hero's journey.

Also available on DVD: **Ad Astra:** An astronaut (Brad Pitt) journeys into space in search of his missing father (Tommy Lee Jones).

Rambo: Last Blood: John Rambo (Sylvester Stallone) fights to save young Gabrielle (Yvette Monreal) from a violent Mexican drug cartel.

Oveer: A basketball-turned-cross-country coach (Alex Kendrick) works with a troubled high school runner with asthma (Aryn Wright-Thompson).

Acceleration: A crime lord (Dolph Lundgren) forces a woman (Katie Holmes) to do his dirty work in Los Angeles in order to see her son again.

"Killjoys: Season Five": The fifth season of the Canadian space adventure drama following a trio of bounty hunters.

Trick: A detective hunts down a man (Michael Epps) who appears and terrorizes a small town every Halloween. Omar Epps stars.

Where's My Roy Cohn?: This documentary follows the life of the American lawyer and political fixer with connections to Sen. Joseph McCarthy and President Donald Trump.

— Katie Foran-McHale/TNS



PHILIPPE ANTONELLO, AMAZON STUDIOS/AP

Rachel Brosnahan stars as Midge Maisel in "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel." Season three is now streaming on Amazon Prime.

'Maisel' cast primed for season 3

Amazon's housewife-comedian rises to ever bigger challenges

BY MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

The creator of "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" likes to send cryptic texts to her actors while the show is on hiatus. They're often clues about what everyone can expect they'll be doing.

Before Season 2, Amy Sherman-Palladino asked Rachel Brosnahan, "Can you ride a bike and play pingpong?" Actress Marin Hinkle was asked if she could speak French and Michael Zegen got an unusual inquiry: "Can you throw a baseball in the air with a cigarette in your mouth and a beer bottle in the other hand?"

Sure enough, come filming, Brosnahan was playing table tennis, Hinkle was speaking French and Zegen was in a field hitting baseballs while smoking and downing a beer. So Brosnahan knew she was going to be challenged when she got a new text from Sherman-Palladino before Season 3 started filming.

The Amazon hit show, which stars Brosnahan as 1950s housewife-turned-comedian Midge Maisel, had ended last season with her about to go on a European tour. Her star was on the rise but the text from Sherman-Palladino still took the actress' breath away: "Your first audience is going to be 850 people. I hope you're cool with that."

Brosnahan wasn't exactly totally cool with that at first, but rallied. Season 3 opens with her doing her act in front of hundreds of uniformed U.S. Army soldiers. "I just want you to know how much I admire you guys. I could never be brave enough to wear the same outfit every day," she tells them.

Brosnahan's Maisel has a hunger full of soldiers bursting into laughter, and the actress tells The Associated Press that

she and her fellow actors are glad they get the chance to do such interesting things onscreen.

"We all share this feeling that we're being constantly stretched and pushed as performers in ways we never could have anticipated," she said. "I never, in a million years, could have imagined this would be what I would be doing, let alone be the thing that I'm most well known for: playing a stand-up comedian in the 1950s. It continues to be so surprising."

Fans who tune into Season 3 will find Maisel fully diving into her comedy career, having come to the conclusion that she can't juggle a romantic relationship, motherhood and work all at the same time. She's on a European tour, opening for an African American superstar singer.

"She's found a renewed sense of self. I think she feels grounded in this journey, whereas in a lot of Season 2 she was a little wishy-washy. She wasn't sure if she wanted to dive all the way in. She kind of had one foot out the door," said Brosnahan.

Taking care of her kids back home is her estranged husband, Joel, played by Zegen. It was Joel's infidelity that indirectly triggered Maisel's comedy career, and the show's writers have evolved his character from a heel into a multidimensional man.

"He is a good parent, especially this season. He's really trying. And I think that is the key: He is trying. He's trying to make up for his wrongdoings," said Zegen. "He's coming around to the fact that she's doing well and she's successful and he needs to be supportive."

While the debut of "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" in 2017 earned plenty of buzz — as well as Golden Globes and Emmys — Season 3 dawns with something of a target on

the show's back. Critics have questioned Maisel's mothering, debated whether the show celebrates white feminism, hides lesbianism and skips over racial discord.

Brosnahan said there's a double standard for female and male characters who play parents on TV that should be corrected — who, after all, slammed Don Draper's parenting skills on "Mad Men?" — and said racial inequalities will be addressed in the new season.

"I don't think we could avoid it, certainly," said the actress. "Midge is on tour with a black man in 1960. He's a superstar. That means he gets to move through white spaces differently, and that's not something that goes unnoticed by Midge."

Brosnahan and Zegen know that there will always be haters, especially after the show's success. "I only get frustrated when the criticism feels mean-spirited rather than substantive," said Brosnahan. "Ultimately, we're here for entertainment and hopefully we're also, simultaneously, having a conversation about pieces of something larger. That's what great art does."

One thing that hasn't changed may be a little surprising: Brosnahan isn't yet fully comfortable as a stand-up comedian. In the first season, she could tell herself she was just having a prolonged mental breakdown onstage. But now her comedy sets are more complicated, and the actress admits to being intimidated.

"As the seasons go on, and Midge starts playing for bigger and bigger audiences and totally different houses and different states and different countries, she has to become a more technically proficient comedian. And so I do," she said. "That continues to be absolutely horrifying."

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

The family that exercises together ...

Research shows parents' encouragement is key to children's activity level

By MORGAN VOIGT

Special to The Washington Post

Craig and Dawn Reese have made an important modification to the one-car garage of their suburban Washington house: They've covered the floor with a layer of plywood and thick black mats. "That's to cushion the blow when we drop our weights," Craig, 44, said.

The space is crowded with workout equipment. There's a rowing machine, a ski machine and a power rack, to name a few pieces, and a tall heater for the colder months. Resistance bands hang on the wall. The couple has 100-pound sandbags and kettlebells up to 70 pounds; Craig estimates that they've got 600 pounds in plate weights, too. The elaborate setup is a testament to the priority fitness takes in their family.

It started a few years ago, when Dawn decided to get into shape while Craig, an officer in the Marine Corps, was deployed. "I was always thin, but I couldn't run up the street," Dawn, 46, said. "I would go into the gym and be intimidated." She hired a personal trainer, which ignited a passion for fitness, and when Craig returned, she began going to CrossFit with him.

Their enthusiasm for CrossFit made an impression on their children: Jyllian, now 16, and Weston, now 13, saw the commitment and energy their parents were putting into working out — and the positive results — and wanted to join. "Jyllian was the first one that said, 'Can I try?'" Dawn said. "We started teaching her Olympic lifting and she loved it."

Dawn and Craig began accumulating gym equipment and exercise certifications. Dawn is an ACE-certified personal trainer and youth fitness specialist, and Craig has certifications in USA Weightlifting and the Marine Corps' High-Intensity Interval Training program, to name a few. The family works out together in their garage, and the kids visit the CrossFit gym with their parents when they aren't busy with school and sports. The family also does mud runs and obstacle courses together. "It's important that we're out there, doing these things together, as a family," Dawn said.

Experts say it's important that kids get in the habit of exercising. Research indicates that parents' activity level and encouragement play vital roles in determining how physically active their kids are.

Want to foster your own culture of family fitness? Here are eight tips to help (having a gym at home isn't required).

1. Just get moving. "It is so hard to get started — especially when you have kids," Dawn said. Something as simple as getting off the couch and going outside together as a family is a great way to get the ball rolling, said Andrew Shniderman, personal trainer and owner of Fit First Academy, which offers classes and one-on-one training for D.C.-area youths. "Go for a 10-minute walk together," he said. "Spend some time doing something where you are moving."

2. Be enthusiastic — and sincere — about exercise. If you don't enjoy weightlifting, don't expect your clan to suddenly be thrilled about pumping iron. "Kids can sense when you're faking it," Shniderman warns. "Find something that you yourself want to do." If you bring true excitement to an activity, the whole family will pick up on that. In the same vein, Shniderman said, try to keep your entire workout engaging and high energy, whether it lasts 15 minutes or an hour.

3. Make a plan and stick with it. Every Sunday, Dawn gathers her family and maps out their schedule for their week. "We plan when we're going to work out, who's picking up kids here, who's dropping them off there, what time their sports end, who's starting meals," Dawn said. "Planning is everything."

Consistency and commitment are important, too. "Don't use anything that pops up in your day as an excuse to not

work out," Dawn said. "I'll hear, 'Oh, I have a dentist appointment, I can't go to the gym.' Well, why can't you go before the appointment or after it?" Finding a routine that works for your family may not be easy, Dawn said, "but once you find what works, you'll keep going."

4. Consider an app or a fitness tracker. Recent research shows families that use fitness trackers that incorporate elements such as points or levels — otherwise known as "gamification" — are more likely to achieve their fitness goals than those who do not.

In a 2017 study, researchers at the University of Pennsylvania and Boston University followed adults from 94 families who engaged in a game to track their steps for 12 weeks, with a 12-week follow-up. The study's big takeaway: Adding a social game component to their exercise technology "significantly increased physical activity among families." Digital exercise tracking comes with the bonus of being able to easily see the stats on your progress, too, which helps you celebrate the achievements.

5. Find a family-friendly gym. Gyms can provide an array of opportunities for families to work out together, according to Robin Hedrick, director of community health for the YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities, which offer an extensive lineup of group exercise classes for families, including yoga, boot camps and dance classes.

"It doesn't matter what you choose to do," Hedrick said in an email. "It is important for children to see their parents exercising or 'playing' with them."

6. Try an event that isn't timed. Signing up for an untimed family event such as a Volksmarch or a bike tour can help take the pressure off performance and keep the focus on a shared activity. Or consider Tough Mudder, held across the U.S. and other countries. It's a muddy obstacle course series that was originally developed in 2010 for adults. The goal was to create an experience that encourages teamwork over competition. Tough Mudder chief executive Kyle McLaughlin said.

The event morphed into a "fitness festival" atmosphere when participants started bringing their families, he said. So about five years ago, the organization introduced the Mini Mudder, a scaled-down version for kids ages 5 to 12, held on a quarter-mile loop. While parents and kids don't compete together, siblings can. Tough Mudder's ethos is a good thing for families to keep in mind: "It's not about time or places and being first," McLaughlin said. "It's about doing stuff together."

7. Don't push your kids too hard. When your kids give you "the look," it's time to switch it up, Shniderman said. "A child is not like an adult. Adults know their limits and they need somebody to break their limits," he said. "Kids are completely different." Keep it from becoming a negative experience.

And remember, you're parents, not coaches. "Sometimes teenagers get really frustrated when they can't master a skill, and they want to give up," Dawn said. "That's when I turn Mom back on. I tell them, 'It's okay it didn't work out the first time; we have to keep trying.' Especially with CrossFit, it's a lifetime of learning the skills."

8. Get creative with your workouts. A little bit of imagination can go a long way. Shniderman points to a bear crawl as an example: "It's not a bear crawl anymore," he said. "It's a 'magic spider walk.' I say, 'You're not on the floor, you're on a web. The only thing that can stick to this web are your magic hands and magic feet.'"

Now the kids are more bought in. They don't want to get stuck on the spider web.

Same goal, just a different way to execute it."

Shniderman said he spends hours thinking up creative games involving exercise. "I never say, 'Here's my book of workouts and games; I'm done!'" he said. "The way kids interact with workouts changes from week to week and from year to year." Just keeping exercise fun and fresh, whether it's new games, different workout moves or changing goals, will go a long way toward establishing a family that works out together — and enjoys it.



WEEKEND: FAMILY

A smooth ride

Tips for using car seats while traveling overseas

By LISA GAY

Special to The Washington Post

Whether spotting wild ponies on a beach or stargazing from remote campsites, family travel is an unforgettable experience for even the littlet members. Experiences you'd like to forget? Trying to juggle bulky car seats while wrangling toddlers in a crowded airport. Mustering up the brain power needed to strap a wriggly child into a never-before-used car seat after a long flight. Discovering that the rental car company has only an infant seat — and you have a 6-year-old.

The issue of car seats is one of the most frustrating aspects of family travel — and one that often has less-than-ideal solutions, because many countries don't require car seats for children of any age, even infants. According to a 2018 World Health Organization report on road safety, only 84 countries have any federal or national law requiring child restraints.

"It's getting better, but for a lot of my family in Hong Kong, the concept of a car seat is weird to them. It just wouldn't cross their mind to get a car seat on their own," said father of three Joe Cheung, a blogger and podcaster at As the Joe Flies.

"It's tricky," said Marianne Rogerson, a mother of two and blogger at Mum on the Move. "There are a lot of countries that don't have car seat laws. Some don't even have seat belt laws. We've had times in Cambodia and Myanmar where the travel agency or hotel car didn't have any seat belts that worked."

Keep safe (and sane!) with these tips:

Take your own (if possible)

Renting a car seat at your destination may seem like a smart alternative to schlepping your own to and from the airport, especially when you have multiple children. But depending on a third party to provide car seats has risks.

"When we had our first child, we made a family trip to Vietnam," recalled mother of three Elisabeth Koch, a Beijing-based milliner. "We were going from the north to the south of Vietnam with our 1-year-old. We were super specific with the travel agency: We need a car seat!"

"Of course, when we got there, there wasn't even a car seat at all. They were like, 'What? Car seat?'"

Car rental agencies and ride-hailing services are usually the most convenient route for finding vehicles with car seats.

But you might end up with a model that your child doesn't fit into easily or is difficult to install. This is an oft-overlooked aspect of the car seat conundrum.

Check local vehicle standards

The obvious advantage in taking your own car seat is that you already know how to use it. However, you'll still need to do some research to ensure it is compatible with vehicles at your destination.

Assume that seat belts will not automatically lock, as is standard in the U.S. and Canada. Check the manual to find out whether the car seat has a built-in locking device, or learn to use a locking clip. But be warned: Locking clips are not easy for novices to use, nor are they a practical solution for taxis or ride hailing. Two locking devices available abroad are the Lockie (\$7) and SafeGrip Belt Clamp (\$9), both much easier to use than the traditional locking clip.

Use a travel system for infants

To both fly and get around on the ground with a baby, you might need a travel system, which gets you from cab to curbside, then all the way to the gate.

Consider investing in gear "more optimized for those needs than your everyday needs," said Alisa Baer, a pediatrician, certified child passenger safety instructor and co-founder of the website the Car Seat Lady.

Travel systems seamlessly combine an infant car seat and stroller, and you can often use your chosen car seat with a favorite stroller by purchasing an adapter. Some parenting blogs offer incredibly detailed Excel charts listing which car seats can be used with which strollers.

For toddlers, try rear-facing convertible seats. Not only is this position considered safer (the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends rear-facing for as long as the seat allows), but it also gives you maximum flexibility overseas when the seat has a built-in locking device. Additionally, a rear-facing convertible seat allows you to strap in your child before you put the seat in the car. That means your toddler or preschooler won't be able to run off while you are still fiddling around with installation.

Let kids handle their kit

By the time your child is old enough to use a booster seat, they are likely to be able to carry it around themselves. The Mifold (\$39.99) and the BubbleBum (\$34.99) are two products that can be easily slipped into a child's backpack and come highly recommended by family travelers.

Baer recommends the Graco RightGuide, a lightweight, backless booster seat (\$40). A useful Europe-only option is the Trunki Boostapak (\$60), worn on your child's back, with additional space to pack snacks and toys. If you already feel loaded down with car seats for younger siblings, a travel vest, which brings the child down to a safer position, is an emerging alternative to traditional boosters.

Don't substitute baby carriers

The popularity of baby carriers has led to some parents using them in taxis and taxi alternatives. But they are no substitute for car seats. A sobering video on the Car Seat Lady demonstrates how one popular brand of baby carrier breaks in a low-speed accident of just 21 mph. Even belting over the carrier is not recommended, as the child can get crushed between the parent and the seat belt during a crash.

Don't let perfect be the enemy of good

You might be overwhelmed by all these details, but don't let this put you off using car seats when traveling abroad. Insist on taxis or cars that have working seat belts, to keep yourself and your children safe. "The key is one person, one belt. Every person uses a belt on every ride. Not holding, not (baby) wearing, not sharing a belt and not skipping a belt for anyone, adults or children," said Baer.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



The truth about men and dogs

From a plastic chair beside a bubbling aquarium tank occupied by one lonely suckerfish, I relayed our dog's recent behavior to the veterinarian.

"Moby's been acting ... well, funny. He's walking stiffly, favoring his left side, whining a lot, and he won't get up for anything — except meals, of course. He is a bit ... off all."

The assistant distracted Moby with treats while the vet did several tests and drew a vial of blood. While pumping antibacterial gel into her hand from an enormous jug sitting near the examining room sink, she broke the news. "Mrs. Molinari, your big guy here has cervical disc inflammation that is causing him pretty severe pain. This kind of condition warrants aggressive treatment, so we'll put him on steroids, Gabapentin, muscle relaxers and strict bed rest. Next week, once the pain subsides a bit, we'll do X-rays and start physical therapy."

Before we were released to wait for medications and paperwork in the lobby, the veterinarian's assistant wheeled a suitcase-sized machine into the examining room. She explained that laser therapy could help to reduce Moby's disc inflammation. We all donned protective glasses to protect our eyes, and she flipped the switch. Moby sat obediently, looking somewhat humiliated by the dog goggles that made him look like something out of a Snoopy the Flying Ace comic strip, while the assistant ran the humming laser wand up and down his stout neck. After being given instructions on how to use the device, we went out to the lobby. I sat on a bench with two old ladies stroking a cat with cataracts, listening to surprisingly loud baritone squeals emanating from a crate containing a tiny pink and gray pig, when a sudden wave of déjà vu washed over me like a lukewarm flea shampoo.

The veterinarian's words seemed so familiar ... Where had I heard them before?

Later at home, freshly medicated Moby slept soundly on his kitchen dog bed while I relayed the news to my husband, Francis, over cups of coffee.

"He got a laser treatment?" he asked incredulously. "How come I can't get lasered? For Criminy's sake, I got diagnosed with bulging discs at the VA two years ago and I can't even get a shot of cortisone without making a federal case! I'm still waiting on the PT referral I requested weeks ago. But our dog had laser therapy ten minutes after arriving at the vet? Something is wrong here!"

I shrugged nonchalantly and went back to scribbling my holiday To Do list, accustomed to Francis griping about his sciatica. But then it hit me.

Just like Moby, Francis acted strangely. He walked with a limp, favoring his left side. He groaned, moaned, winced and whined at the slightest movement, especially if others were watching. A look of self-pity had taken up permanent residence on his face. He was prescribed — you guessed it — Gabapentin, among other medications. And he only got up from his lounge chair for meals.

Come to think of it, even without spinal ailments, Francis and Moby had been acting kind of weird. They both lived for every meal, shed body hair around the house, yawned too much, scratched inappropriately, and were driven by their bodily functions.

How had I missed the obvious parallels?

Despite my husband's tendency toward narcissism, the sight of our people-pleasing lab, in a drugged stupor, tugged Francis' attention away from his favorite subject — himself — for a moment.

"Poor guy. What else did the vet tell you to do?"

"She said we need to make sure he sleeps a lot. He should only get up for meals and quick potty breaks. If he's feeling better in a week or two, we'll start physical therapy, which entails some kind of massage and exercises with treats for rewards," I told Francis.

He stared intently at Moby, snoring softly from his cozy kitchen nest. "Sheesh," he said after several beats of silence, "I want those doctor's orders."

I glanced at my lengthy holiday to-do list, and thought, "Don't we all."

Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari's columns at: themeatandpotatoesoflife.com
Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@googlemail.com

WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

ACTUALLY ...

BY PATRICK MERRELL / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Patrick Merrell, of Vero Beach, Fla., is a freelance cartoonist, writer, graphic designer, photographer and puzzle maker. "All in about equal measure," he says. For 40 years he has been drawing cartoons for books, periodicals (including Mad magazine) and other publications. Nice is a recurring theme. Below is the illustration he added to this puzzle just for fun. This is Pat's 91st crossword for The Times. —W.S.



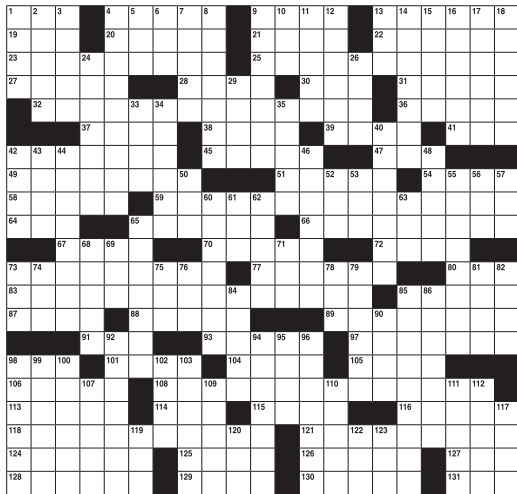
ACROSS

- 1 Bird growing up Down Under
- 4 Russian novelist Maxim
- 9 Honey
- 13 Suddenly stand at attention
- 19 Apt move when dancing the salsa?
- 20 Home of the Huskies, informally
- 21 "He's like ____ to me"
- 22 Undo, legislatively
- 23 Notwithstanding
- 25 It abuts water on only one of its four sides
- 27 Attach, as a ribbon
- 28 Possible result of late payments, informally
- 30 Verb on a candy heart
- 31 Tithing portion
- 32 It's an ellipse
- 36 "Little House on the Prairie" girl
- 37 Italian "daring"
- 38 Like drumheads
- 39 Frankish finish
- 41 Inker's artwork
- 42 Meeting expectations
- 45 Source of Andrew Carnegie's fortune
- 47 Her extension?

- 49 Lambaste
- 51 Competitor
- 54 Of all time
- 58 Impersonator's skill
- 59 It was predominantly German
- 64 Sci-fi character depicted as a glowing red dot
- 65 Punjab's capital
- 66 Things around a cloverleaf
- 67 Footprint maker
- 70 Give ____ on the wrist
- 72 Jennifer who wrote the Pulitzer-winning "A Visit From the Goon Squad"
- 73 Currently
- 77 Van Gogh
- 80 Move offshore, say
- 83 It's an American name for a German game
- 85 Fuel mileage, for example
- 87 Gambling game akin to bingo
- 88 Drift ice pieces
- 89 Vouch for
- 91 Letters on an incomplete syllabus
- 93 Serious
- 97 Like par 2 holes among all holes in miniature golf
- 98 Rapper Tone ____
- 101 ____ the Orange (Syracuse mascot)
- 104 Pretentious

- 105 Defibrillator pros
- 106 Some rectangular tablets
- 7 Big name in the soup aisle
- 8 Overruns
- 9 Highly decorated
- 10 Eruption particulates
- 11 When doubled, a Yale football song
- 12 Survive
- 13 ____ Lanka
- 14 Spoons, e.g.
- 15 Cop ____
- 16 It's a legume
- 17 Hindu tradition that's two men's names in reverse
- 18 Trite
- 24 Popular microwave snack
- 26 What avengers get
- 29 Exam for many sophs. and jrs.
- 33 Second-most-popular Vietnamese surname (after Nguyen)
- 34 Kitt who played Catwoman on TV
- 35 In ____ development
- 40 Expunge
- 42 Home to the Sundance Film Festival
- 43 Salt's hip-hop counterpart
- 44 Aerobic maneuver
- 46 Tart dessert
- 48 Vintage-looking shade
- 50 La-la lead-in

- 6 Unidentified person in a suit
- 7 Big name in the soup aisle
- 8 Overruns
- 9 Highly decorated
- 10 Eruption particulates
- 11 When doubled, a Yale football song
- 12 Survive
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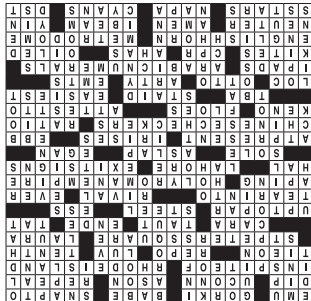
- 52 Preventive medicine, slangily
- 53 "Star Wars" nickname
- 55 Short story
- 56 West end?
- 57 Fickleness, for short
- 60 Abhors
- 61 Slices of life: Abbr.
- 62 Historic discovery
- 63 Umami enhancer, for short
- 65 What diet products often contain
- 68 Alternative indication
- 69 First, last, male or female name
- 71 Gilded chest in the Bible
- 73 Catby's comics cry
- 74 Not just any
- 75 Fish that's 69-Down reversed
- 76 High-grade U.S.M.C. enlistee
- 78 Lina lady: Abbr.
- 79 Regard
- 81 Atoms
- 82 A rancher might pull one over a calf
- 84 Cornerstone abbr.
- 85 They're lousy places to sleep
- 86 "To repeat..."
- 90 Subdued
- 92 More overbearing
- 94 Huffington of journalism
- 95 Septennial symptom?
- 96 Charismatic
- 98 Compares (to)
- 99 Throws in one's two cents
- 100 It usually comes from sheep
- 102 Dash dial
- 103 Unmatched sock, informally
- 107 Silly spot
- 109 Welcoming whiff
- 110 Phrase before a date
- 111 Eponym of a London insurer
- 112 Highway haulers
- 117 Parking-lot souvenir
- 119 AARPers
- 120 Part of a gym set
- 122 Bagged leaves?
- 123 Dashed

GUNSTON STREET



"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and visit gunstonstreet.com.

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



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FACES

Reynolds picks up picked-on Peloton actress for gin ad

BY JOHN CARUCCI
Associated Press

Ryan Reynolds says he relates to the social media criticism heaped on the Peloton ad actress. In fact, that feeling led him to hire her for a commercial promoting his gin company.

Reynolds spoke Tuesday about the uproar while promoting his new action flick, the Michael Bay-directed "6 Underground."

In the Peloton commercial, Monica Ruiz portrays a wife who receives an exercise bike as a Christmas present, and chronicles her yearlong journey to get in shape. The commercial ends with the wife thanking her husband for the gift. After the spot aired, the character was mocked for several reasons: Some noted she was already thin, others mocked her for having a "nervous" expression, and others were angry her husband gave her an exercise gift, as if she needed to lose weight.

Reynolds thought the viral negativity was unfair, and said it's "a situation that I've been in many times before" as an actor.

"You put it out there, and it doesn't quite work, and you feel a little alienated and stuff. So, I had tremendous empathy for her in that moment," Reynolds said at the premiere of his new action flick, "6 Underground."

"Doing the Aviation Gin ad sort of gave her some authorship over some of this conversation, which I loved," he said. "And she's, she's the best. She's really funny, really smart."

In "6 Underground," which is now streaming on Netflix, Reynolds stars as the leader of a group of six warriors, each with their own special set of skills. After faking their own deaths, they take on a number for their names, ranging from One to Six, and go underground to take down a dictator. Reynolds plays One.

The movie also stars French actress Melanie Laurent, Manuel Garcia-Rulfo, Ben Hardy, Adria Arjona, Dave Franco and Israeli actor Lior Raz.

It was directed by Michael Bay, who is known for the big-screen action movies like "Armageddon," "The Rock" and "Transformers" series. But he says it worked for him to pair with Netflix.

"Here's the thing: I love big cinema. But Netflix is a new voice. It is a big, it's a big name out here right now. And it's doing a lot of interesting content. And it gives it — it's all over the world, you know, access to almost 250 million people," Bay said.

Ryan Reynolds: Actor, gin producer, friend to misunderstood actresses.

CHARLES SYKES, INVISION/AP



Kardashian West sues over 'Vampire Facial'

Reality TV star and businesswoman Kim Kardashian West is suing an Alabama doctor over claims he wrongly used her image to promote a medical procedure called a "Vampire Facial."

West filed suit Tuesday in Los Angeles against Dr. Charles Runels of coastal Fairhope, Ala. The suit claims Runels misused West's image in promotional materials after she posted a photo of herself on social media showing the results of a "Vampire Facial."

West, a reality TV star and successful businesswoman who has a number of beauty and lifestyle enterprises and millions of followers on social media, asked a federal judge to bar Runels from using her name or photo and to make him and any other doctors who benefited pay her profits.

Runels, 59, said in a telephone interview Wednesday that West wrongly used his trademarked name for a medical procedure to promote her image. He called the lawsuit "disappointing."

"We're trying to do good medicine. The last thing we want to do is spend millions of dollars arguing with a celebrity," he said.

The cosmetic procedure involves drawing a patient's blood, spinning it in a centrifuge and then injecting small amounts under the skin using multiple small needles, Runels' website says, and blood also is applied topically on the skin.

Women in Entertainment gala honors Witherspoon

Reese Witherspoon remembered when she met with several film production studios in 2011 to ask them how many movies were being developed for women.

The studios' responses nearly floored her.

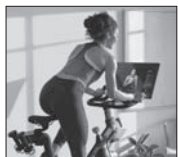
"Of all the major seven studios, the answer was one," Witherspoon said after she received the prestigious Sherry Lansing Leadership Award at The Hollywood Reporter's Women in Entertainment breakfast gala Wednesday in Los Angeles. The Oscar- and Emmy-winning actress said she was grateful to receive the award named after Lansing, the former Paramount Pictures CEO who was the first woman to head a Hollywood studio. The award honors those excelling in film and making philanthropic contributions.

Witherspoon said the moment helped empower her to start her own production company, Hello Sunshine, which has produced Oscar-nominated films "Gone Girl," "Wild" and the HBO drama series "Big Little Lies" with an all-female leading cast.

Other news

■ The rapper known as **Saucy Santana** said he was one of three people shot and wounded during a drive-by shooting near Miami early Wednesday morning. At least six shots were fired, striking all three of the occupants of the vehicle in which Santana and his friends were riding. No arrests were immediately reported.

From The Associated Press



TNS

Monica Ruiz, in a television advertisement for Peloton

A\$AP Rocky performs in Sweden months after conviction for brawl

Associated Press

A\$AP Rocky is back in Sweden. The American rapper performed Wednesday evening, four months after he was convicted of assault for a violent street brawl.

The curtain raised at Stockholm's Ericsson Globe arena to the sight of a stage-wide metal cage enclosing male dancers. They attempted to break free as soon as the rapper began to perform, a not-so-subtle reference to his nearly monthlong incarceration this summer pending his trial.

But A\$AP Rocky, whose real name is Rakim Mayers, said he wasn't there to talk about his treatment in the hands of the Swedish authorities but to

"spread love and have fun."

However, the performance was peppered with references to his time in a Swedish prison, including a simulated arrest. The rapper joked he felt like "an honored Swede at this point."

Following a visit to a school in the suburbs of the Swedish capital earlier in the day, Mayers posted an open invitation to his concert on Instagram.

"Whoever's from the hood, they get in for free," he said in a video that went viral on social media and has led to lines of youngsters making their way into the capital.

Concert promoter Live Nation said last month that Mayers scheduled the show "after tremendous support from the Swedish fans."



JESSICA GOW, TT/AP

Rapper A\$AP Rocky performs Dec. 11 in Stockholm.

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OPINION

By GREG WEINER
Special to The Washington Post

The Supreme Court's newly reinforced conservative majority is facing a test. It could use a case before the court as an opportunity to expand the scope of Second Amendment protections. Or it could pursue the correct conservative approach: decline the temptation to intervene.

This is a tension as old as the republic. In 1793, the Washington administration asked the Supreme Court to advise it about the interpretation of treaties. The court, under Chief Justice John Jay, demurred. That set a precedent against the court issuing hypothetical opinions, rather than limiting itself to the actual "cases and controversies" over which the Constitution gives it jurisdiction.

Last week, the court heard arguments in a case involving a New York City rule that restricted the ability of law-abiding gun owners to transport their weapons. Many constitutional conservatives are eager for the court, which has not addressed the scope of Second Amendment rights since its landmark ruling more than a decade ago, to assert its authority and define the Second Amendment broadly. Jay might reply that they should be more concerned about the Supreme Court defining its own power broadly.

The problem is that the case is moot. New York City repealed the rule at issue after the Supreme Court agreed to hear the challenge, and New York state further closed the door by passing a statute that protects the ability of gun owners to transport weapons. This was an effort to prevent the court from issuing an opinion by resolving the controversy in advance.

For the court to rule in the absence of a live controversy — to pronounce on the constitutionality of a law no longer on the books — is not the same as an "advisory opinion" such as the one Jay declined to provide in 1793. But it implicates the same

The court's unwillingness to philosophize about the Constitution in the abstract is one of the most important limits on its power.

principle. The court's unwillingness to philosophize about the Constitution in the abstract is one of the most important limits on its power.

What was alarming about the oral arguments was the seeming willingness of two conservative justices, Samuel Alito and Neil Gorsuch, to ignore this fundamental principle. Alito, for example, suggested the case was not moot because the plaintiffs did not get "a declaration that the old law was unconstitutional, period." But that is exactly why the case is moot: The old rule no longer exists. Gorsuch wondered whether allowing the plaintiffs to seek damages for what they assert was a violation of their Second Amendment rights — something they did not seek in the original case — could render it active again.

Constitutional conservatives should see that eagerness to decide the case less as an opportunity to expand the Second Amendment than as a troubling precedent for expanding the power of the court. That it would occur just as conservatives have solidified a majority on the court would invite cynicism, as well.

Constitutional conservatives have long argued that elected branches of government should more fully consider constitutional questions. Whether the city and state of New York did so with sufficient purity of motive or whether they were simply trying to short-circuit the case before an adverse ruling from the Supreme Court is irrelevant. The fact remains that the rule was repealed in the face of constitutional concerns. Constitutional conservatives should welcome, not ignore, that development.

Honesty about Afghanistan would be a life-saver

By JAY AMBROSE
Tribune News Service

It's no small thing when grotesque mistakes and lies about them cost 2,300 lives and a trillion dollars, but that's what we got from U.S. officials who have kept us at war in Afghanistan for 18 years. A chief culprit is the Pentagon, of course, but also presidents, Congress and the State Department. And the overall picture is powerfully sustained by a Washington Post expose that comes at us at a time when so much else in our republic seems a mess.

After all, we right now have House Democrats atrociously and deceptively abusing their power in an impeachment effort doing more to toss principles out the window than a legitimately elected if fault-finding president who will be saved by the Senate. We likewise have a Justice Department explicitly shown in an official report to have engaged in incompetent, strikingly dishonest practices to prove a nonexistent Russian collusion.

And on top of all of these scandals we once-proud Americans are learning how the military went askew in Afghanistan after an initial attack following the 9/11 tragedy at the hands of al-Qaida. We needed to strike back but we were going to prevent future terrorism on our shores, and we asked the Taliban, then pretty much in charge of Afghanistan, to let us punish

the al-Qaida conspirators in the neighborhood. The Taliban said no, and we invaded, pushed the Taliban aside and shredded al-Qaida as its terror-struck terrorists fled into Pakistan. We should have then said goodbye with a promise to visit again if necessary.

Instead, our military hung around with no idea of what our mission was or what strategies would work in a land where we understood nothing about the culture. We weren't going to try nation building, but we did, leading to confusion and unseemable corruption. We were going to stop the opium trade, but saw it blossom. We were going to train the Afghan army, but it's still untrained. We were going to crush al-Qaida, but what was left was gone. We were going to sink the Taliban but it was big and entrenched and we should have negotiated instead of just watching it rise again. We were going to protect civilians but saw thousands killed.

We heard all kinds of positive stories from people named Bush and Obama along with the military, bureaucrats and members of Congress even if they all knew how much was amiss. There was then a federal project to get at the truth through hundreds of interviews and its report was hidden away. For several years now, The Post has tried to get access to it, not through leaks but through the Freedom of Information Act, and we have been successful. What it has come up with is story

The framers of the Constitution were a diverse group, but it is fair to characterize them broadly as believing legislatures and executives should deliberate on constitutional questions. The reason was that the people could not simply outsource constitutional questions to the courts. All of us have a responsibility to consider them because the Constitution is the property of citizens. Leaving such issues solely in the hands of the judiciary would risk a moral hazard by which the elected branches of government feel free to ignore constitutional questions on the grounds that the judiciary will resolve them.

The underlying controversy involves a debate between originalists who seek a more limited judiciary on the model of Robert Bork's and the increasingly ascendant libertarian view of originalism, known as "judicial engagement," that calls on jurists to lean aggressively into the protection of rights.

Yet the Constitution does not belong to the courts alone. In the noblest sense, it is a political instrument. Requiring citizens to debate constitutional questions calls us to our civic duty. Consigning them to the judiciary lets us off the hook. As such, entities such as the New York City Council and state legislature — where citizens are more immediately represented — are exactly where constitutional questions belong. Conservatives may disagree with those bodies' conclusions, but the constitutional design assumes legislatures are the primary forum for constitutional disputes.

Originalists should reject the temptation to push for a ruling on the Second Amendment many of them would celebrate and focus instead on a larger constitutional priority: the limitation of the judiciary to "cases and controversies." The scope of judicial power is a far more fundamental question than the scope of a single constitutional provision.

Greg Weiner is an associate professor of political science at Assumption College and a visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.

after story of the missteps, the failures, the negative consequences, the pointlessness of so much that has been tried.

I myself recently heard such a story at a gathering spoken to by a brave if fearful soldier who had served as a medic in Afghanistan for four years. He showed us videos of bloody U.S. soldiers being carried into helicopters. He showed pictures of soldiers who were killed in combat. He told of awful incidents. He told of watching horrifying drone attacks on long-distance monitors. He said everyone in Afghanistan knew at least one person killed by the United States. At the same time, and to my surprise, he did not want total withdrawal. He clearly loved the Afghan people and thought the Taliban would return to excruciating power if we left. I have no choice but to respect his view even if I now feel differently.

Our resources extend only so far and there is no way we can keep every place else in the world safe from itself. We need to keep an eye on Afghanistan, especially since we know other terrorist groups are building bases there, and we should be prepared to hit hard and get out if the need arises. But we should quit sacrificing American lives over and meanwhile demand truth from people who are supposedly our public servants.

Jay Ambrose is an op-ed columnist for Tribune News Service.

OPINION

What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by The Associated Press and other stateside syndicates.

Ban is toothless if Russia's athletes can still compete

Chicago Tribune

International anti-doping regulators say they've had it with Russian cheating and have banned the country from international competition for four years. That includes the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo and the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing. What does that ban really mean?

Well, imagine a Russian volleyball team wins gold. The team takes the podium. But because of the ban, the athletes aren't wearing Russian uniforms. Instead, they don whatever drab, understated garb signifies being neutrals from nowhere in particular. No Russian flag goes up in that anglole, no Russian anthem fills the arena.

Back in Moscow, what do you think Russian President Vladimir Putin's reaction would be? Our guess is a wide, beaming smile and a celebratory swig of the best vodka rubles can buy. Russians still will have won gold, and for a country bent on a scan-at-any-cost approach to winning, bringing home the gold is all that matters.

In issuing its verdict Monday, the World Anti-Doping Agency said that, even after Russia was exposed as a systematic cheater at the Sochi Winter Olympics in 2014 and the list of banned athletes in the 2018 Winter Games, Russian officials persisted in their chicanery. They did so most recently by manipulating a database containing test results for Russian athletes.

The agency could have slapped an outright ban on Russia that barred every Russian athlete from Tokyo, Beijing, the World Cup and all other international competitions for four years. Instead, the WADA flinched.

Athletes around the world who rely only on grit, passion and commitment to thrive for Olympic glory have every right to feel let down. With stronger action against Russia, the international sports community could have sent a message that cheating is, and will always be, a one-way road to disgrace.

The halfway ban issued by the WADA reinforces the cynicism that much of the world increasingly feels about the Olympics. In the lead-up to the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea, there was hope that banning the Russian flag and anthem would be the cudgel that scared Russia straight. Clearly that measure wasn't enough. Why would international sports officials think it would be enough now?

Only one course of action would give the Kremlin to sit up and take notice — an outright ban on Russian athletes competing.

Trump served Saudis' interests after naval base attack

The Washington Post

President Donald Trump's reaction to the murderous rampage in Pensacola, Fla., on Dec. 6 by an officer of the Royal Air Force of Saudi Arabia was insensitive and grossly insufficient. Three American service members lost their lives and eight were wounded by a Saudi wielding a 9 mm handgun in a brutal, senseless attack. The FBI says is being investigated as terrorism. What does the president say? He finds it "shocking" and conveys the condolences of "very, very devastated" King Salman of Saudi Arabia and his son, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and adds that the king will "help out the families very greatly."



MATTIAS J. OCKER, MIAMI HERALD/AP

Family and friends gather at Vista Memorial Gardens cemetery in Miami Lakes, Fla., on Tuesday for the burial service of Frank Ordonez, a UPS driver who was taken hostage by armed robbers and killed during a shootout with police on Dec. 5.

Not a word from Trump about the threat of terrorism, or a shred of curiosity about motives and whether the Saudi officer was radicalized and by whom, or a thought about what Saudi Arabia could do to help investigate the shooter, or perhaps a lament that a pilot, a guest of the United States, would carry out such a horrific assault on his hosts, or even a worry about where the 21-year-old officer got the weapon. Trump quickly pivoted to say there were a lot of countries participating in the aviator training program. He often performs this pivot, a telltale dodge.

Trump had an inexplicable blind spot for Saudi Arabia. He has no trouble insulting people from other Muslim countries. ... After a terrorist attack in London, he tweeted, "These animals are crazy and must be dealt with through toughness and strength!" But when a Saudi carries out an attack on a U.S. military base, Trump becomes a spokesman and apologist for the king.

King Salman has assured Trump, according to an embassy news release, that he has "directed Saudi security services to cooperate with the relevant American agencies to uncover information that will help determine the cause of this horrific attack." Perhaps Trump thinks Americans have forgotten that when Washington Post contributing columnist Jamal Khashoggi was dismembered in the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul, Trump and members of his administration vowed as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo put it, to pursue "a thorough, transparent and timely investigation, including accountability for those responsible for the killing." That promise remains unfulfilled.

Real crime is what fed FBI's conduct on FISA warrants

The Wall Street Journal

The press corps in portraying Monday's report by Justice Department Inspector General Michael Horowitz as absolution for the FBI, but don't believe it. The report relates a trail of terrible judgment and violations of process that should shock Americans who thought better of their premier law enforcement agency.

Readers can look at the detailed executive summary and decide for themselves. But our own initial reading confirms the worst of what we feared: judgment and violations of process that should shock Americans who thought better of their premier law enforcement agency. Readers can look at the detailed executive summary and decide for themselves. But our own initial reading confirms the worst of what we feared: judgment and violations of process that should shock Americans who thought better of their premier law enforcement agency.

How can anyone, most of all civil lib-

arians, pass this off as no big deal? The absolutism is supposedly that Horowitz concludes that the FBI decision to open a counterintelligence probe against the Trump campaign in July 2016 "was sufficient to predicate the investigation" under current FBI rules. Yet Horowitz also notes that these rules amount to a "low threshold for predication." John Durham, the U.S. attorney investigating these matters for Attorney General William Barr, said Monday he disagrees with Horowitz's conclusions on predication, albeit without elaboration for now.

Horowitz confirms what the FBI had already leaked to friendly reporters, which is that the bureau's alarm in July 2016 was triggered by a conversation that former Trump aide George Papadopoulos had with Australian Alexander Downer. But we learn for the first time that the FBI immediately ramped up its counterintelligence probe to include four Trump campaign officials: Page and Papadopoulos, then-campaign chairman Paul Manafort, and former head of the Defense Intelligence Agency Michael Flynn.

The bureau quickly moved to a full-scale investigation it called Crossfire Hurricane. The FBI's justification, as related to Horowitz, is that the risk of Russian disruption of the 2016 election was too great to ignore.

Yet the bureau never told anyone in the Trump campaign, or even Donald Trump, whom or what it was investigating so he could reduce the danger or distance himself from those advisers. The FBI was investigating the campaign but wouldn't tell the candidate who would soon be elected.

The FBI abuses escalated when it was presented with the Steele dossier. Steele was hired by Glenn Simpson and Fusion GPS, the opposition research outfit hired by law firms for the Clinton campaign. Horowitz confirms that the FBI then used the Steele dossier to trigger its application to the FISA court to spy on Page.

"We determined that the Crossfire Hurricane team's receipt of Steele's election reporting on September 19, 2016 played a central and essential role in the FBI's and Department's decision to seek the FISA order," Horowitz says. This confirms what Rep. Devin Nunes and House Republicans first disclosed in February 2018, which was denied by Rep. Adam Schiff and sneered at by the press at the time.

Horowitz also finds that the FBI told the FISA court that Steele was credible without having tried to confirm the details or verify his sources. Horowitz found seven key "errors or omissions" in the FBI's original FISA application and 10 more in the three subsequent applications. The latter were especially egregious because they

ignored Hurricane that the FBI's own Crossfire Hurricane team had just gathered that cast doubt on the Steele claims.

The omissions include the stunner that Page had been working as an "operational contact" for what Horowitz calls another U.S. agency from 2008 to 2013. Page has said that is the CIA, which Horowitz doesn't confirm, though he does say that Page was reporting on his Russian contacts, which the agency deemed credible.

In other words, the FBI was using Page's Russian contacts as evidence against him to the FISA court even as the other agency considered his reports on those Russians to be helpful to the U.S. Horowitz says the FBI never disclosed that information to the FISA judges.

Democrats and the press are making much of Horowitz's conclusion that he "did not find documentary or testimonial evidence that political bias or improper motivation" influenced FBI decisions. But his report does show that political bias was conveyed to the FISA court from the Clinton campaign via the Steele dossier through the FBI. It was conveyed by Bruce Ohr, a senior Justice Department official whose wife, Nellie Ohr, worked for Fusion GPS. Horowitz may not have found a FBI never disclosed that information to the FISA judges.

Even if you buy the "no bias" line, all of this had major political consequences. Fusion GPS had used media contacts to spread word of the Steele dossier's accusations, and news of the FBI's use of that dossier became a media hook to suggest the accusations were credible. This became another part of the false Russia collusion narrative played up by the press.

At the end of this tangled web, there is not the end of this rape trial. Whether or not there are prosecutions, Barr and Durham should release the entire FISA record to the public. The GOP Senate also needs to call the FISA judges to tell their story under oath.

Thieves to blame for deaths, but shootout is troubling

Miami Herald

A police pursuit of two suspected Coral Gables, Fla., jewelry store robbers ended in shocking violence on Dec. 5 on live TV, for a dead, a jewelry store employee wounded.

The dead included a hostage and an innocent bystander — people you never want to see die in a police operation.

For anyone watching on television as the afternoon rush hour chase of the hijacked UPS truck ended in a bloody shootout from Miami-Dade to Broward County, the culmination was surreal and jarring — a sudden gunbattle between the suspects and police, surrounded by drivers trapped at a traffic light. The most tragic scene happened next. The UPS driver, who found himself in the middle of a barrage of bullets, tried to return fire, but he was only to be fatally wounded, as we watched live.

To their credit, South Florida television stations quickly pulled back or cut the feed to spare the audience of such front seat to violence. But we sadly watched a young man fight for his life, and fail.

The bullets kept coming, more than 100 rounds, killing an unsuspecting motorist and also the two armed robbers. Nearly 20 officers opened fire.

Now many more questions must be answered by the FBI. Could the hostage and the three subsequence applicants. The latter were especially egregious because they

Clearly, the blame lies with the brazen and reckless thieves who sparked this tragedy. But such a tragic loss of life warrants a careful examination of what went wrong, and how we can do better.

Frazz



Dilbert



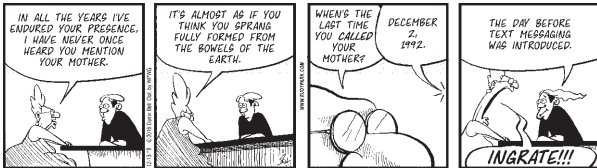
Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3		4	5	6		7	8	9	10	11
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15				16				17				
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			45				46					
48	49	50	51							52		
53					54					55		
56					57					58		

ACROSS

- 1 Pouch
- 4 Compass pt.
- 7 Marina sights
- 12 Actor Danson
- 13 Hooting bird
- 14 Sound
- 15 Melody
- 16 Like upscale designer apparel
- 18 Cattle call
- 19 Strainer
- 20 Cougar
- 22 Gun lobby org.
- 23 Big-screen format
- 27 French article
- 29 Indigenous
- 31 Pago Pago's place
- 34 Walks in water
- 35 Out of reach, maybe
- 37 — canto
- 38 "Born Free" lioness
- 39 Swelled head
- 41 Tug
- 45 Pester
- 47 Floral necklace
- 48 Nongeneric, as a drug
- 52 Hanoi holiday
- 53 Scooter's kin
- 54 Sawbuck
- 55 Poem of praise
- 56 Garden spoilers

DOWN

- 57 Soon-to-be grads
- 58 Sound from a hot wok
- 26 Ballot marks
- 28 — Claire, Wisc.
- 30 Shock partner
- 31 That lady
- 32 Have a bug
- 33 Brit, sports cars
- 36 Teller's partner
- 37 Esision of football
- 40 Pesky insects
- 42 Choir members
- 43 Essentials
- 44 Windy day toys
- 45 Tosses in the lawn
- 46 Desires
- 48 Upscale auto
- 49 Shad product
- 50 Mimic
- 51 Nancy Drew's boyfriend

Answer to Previous Puzzle

FRA	BOS	C	BEEP
LOB	IT	OR	UCLA
ABS	IN	THE	ICAN
	OID	OP	ULENT
BEL	IEF	EST	
LIV	ROY	BULBS	
AREA	GAY	PERU	
HEDGE	PUP	FIE	
	ESQ	PUTTED	
TEA	LEAF	RAJ	
SALE	TAXI	CABS	
ASPS	AMES	BOA	
REOS	REST	SOW	

12-13

CRYPTOQUIP

RB PLAS OLJRQC BQFRJP
OSMLAS WLL WKRD ZDJ
NZWSEC, NZWMK LFW. CLF
MLFQJ OS RD PSELF
WELFOQS.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: A CERTAIN PROLIFIC FILM AND TELEVISION ACTOR'S CHILDREN PROBABLY REFER TO HIM AS DADDY DEVITO.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: O equals B

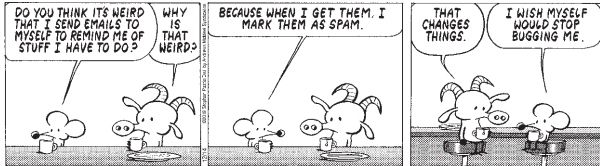
Frazz



Dilbert



Pearls Before Swine



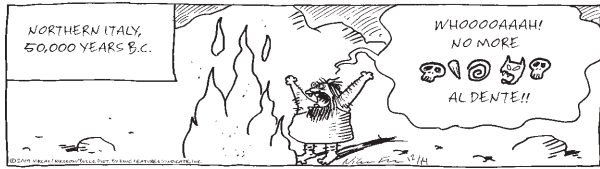
Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
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38	39	40							41			42
43									44			
45					46				47			
48					49				50			
51					52				53			

ACROSS

- 1 "The View" network
- 4 Taverns
- 8 Lion's greeting
- 12 Afternoon get-together
- 13 Rocker Clapton
- 14 Killer whale
- 15 Scull tool
- 16 Couch
- 17 Cannes milk
- 18 Pals in common
- 21 Super Bowl org.
- 22 Remiss
- 23 Sweetie pie
- 26 Gents
- 27 Short do
- 30 Send forth
- 31 In shape
- 32 Jupiter's wife
- 33 Vinyl records
- 34 Hugs
- 35 Out of practice
- 36 Novelist Rand
- 37 Proof letters
- 38 Companions on a tour
- 45 Year-end celebration
- 46 Regrettably
- 47 Knock
- 48 Close
- 49 Microwave, slangly
- 50 Enzyme suffix
- 51 Tend texts
- 52 Actress de Matteo
- 53 Stitch

DOWN

- 1 Physics bit
- 2 Boyfriend
- 3 Shopper's aid
- 4 "Take care of yourself!"
- 5 On — (winning)
- 6 Jazz phrase
- 7 Brilliant red
- 8 Luxury watch brand
- 9 North African port
- 10 Battery fluid
- 11 "Phooey!"
- 19 Military group
- 20 007 creator
- 23 Cartoon frame
- 24 Ref
- 25 Frank McCourt memoir
- 26 Russian jet
- 27 Train alternative
- 28 Toronto's prov.
- 29 Lad
- 31 Neighbor of Sweden
- 32 Hirsch of "Taxi"
- 34 "See ya!"
- 35 Suez Canal terminus
- 36 Dodge
- 37 Tremble
- 38 Daly of "Judging Amy"
- 39 Regretted
- 40 Jai —
- 41 Fuzzy image
- 42 Nest egg choices
- 43 Lighten
- 44 Gush

Answer to Previous Puzzle

S	A	C	E	S	E	B	O	A	T	S
T	E	D	O	W	L	A	U	D	I	O
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M	O	O	S	I	E	V	E			
P	U	M	A	N	R	A	I	M	A	X
			L	E	S		N	A	T	I
S	A	M	O	A		W	A	D	E	S
H	I	G	H	U	P		B	E	L	
E	L	S	A		E	G	O		Y	A
				A	N	N	O	Y		
B	R	A	N	D	N	A	M	E	T	E
M	O	P	E	D		T	E	N		O
W	E	E	D	S		S	R	S		S

12-14

CRYPTOQUIP

"AQIIS LQSV" VOCXYK QXCVD
 NAY QMNQSV NQBCTL CY
 MOZT BTQDVS KQDVAS DOZTD

YPCMTCV: VXYCC UQSYD.
 Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF SOME BODILY FLUIDS BECOME TOO THIN AND WATERY, WATCH OUT. YOU COULD BE IN SERIOUS TROUBLE.
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: C equals T

Stripes

SERVICE DIRECTORY

The Daily Guide to Navigating the European Business Market



Dental

902

Transportation

944

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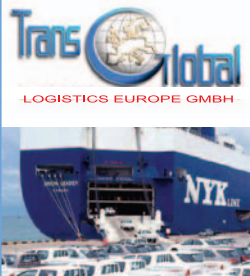
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Automotive 140

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SCOREBOARD

Sports

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Deals

Wednesday's transactions

BASEBALL
MLB — Named Benj. Martinez president of the Baseball Association Team.
AMERICAN LEAGUE
TEXAS RANGERS — Signed Of Omar Maza to the Chicago White Sox for Of Steele Walker and assigned Walter to Frisco (TX).

National League
COLORADO ROCKIES — Agreed to terms with RHP Scott Oberg on a three-year contract.
MILWAUKEE BREWERS — Agreed to terms with RHP Chris L. for a minor league contract.
SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Named Craig Abernethy bullpen/catching coach, Andrew Balaban pitching coach, Brian Kanner pitching director, Karl Correa bench coach, infield/baserunning/infield hitting coach, infield hitting coach, Ethan Katt assistant pitching coach, Matt Kauter hitting coach, major league assistant hitting coach and Justin Velazquez major league hitting coach.
WASHINGTON NATIONALS — Named bench coach Tim Bogar, first base coach Bud Black, third base coach Chip Lake, pitching coach Paul Menhart, hitting coach Kevin Long, assistant hitting coach Pat Ressler, bullpen coach Henry Blanco.

BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association
OKLAHOMA STATE WARRIORS — Signed A. Allen Smallage from Santa Cruz (NBA-G).

FOOTBALL
SACRAMENTO KINGS — Recalled F. W. Gabriel from Stockton (NBA-G).

National Football League
ARIZONA CARDINALS — Signed DL Javier Edwards to the practice squad.
CHICAGO BEARS — Released RB Jeremy Nicholson from the practice squad. Signed WR Reggie Davis to the practice squad.

DALLAS COWBOYS — Placed WR Cedric Wilson on the practice squad. Signed RB Preston Brown off waivers from Oakland (NFL).

MINNESOTA VIKINGS — Signed RB Tony Stewart to the practice squad.
NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS — Signed CB Josh Gable, DL Eric Lee and DB Adrian L. to the practice squad.

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS — Placed DL Sheldon Rankins and DL Marcus Davenport from the practice squad and WR Trevon Thomas from the practice squad.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League
DETROIT RED WINGS — Assigned RW F. Zaitsev to the practice squad. Signed D. Dylan McIlwain to Grand Rapids (AHL).

NEW YORK RANGERS — Assigned F. Ryan to the practice squad (ECHL to Hartford (AHL)).

SOCCER
Major League Soccer
LA GALAXY — Signed F. Sacha Kljestan.

ATP — Named Novak Djokovic **COLETTA**
ARIZONA STATE — Junior RB Eno Benjamin Davis to the practice squad.
COLORADO STATE — Named Steve Fagundes to the practice squad.

FLORIDA ATLANTIC — Named Willie Taggart head coach.
NORTHWESTERN — Named Mike Bajigan offensive coordinator/quartermbacks coach.
UNLV — Named Marcus Arroyo football coach.

College football

Schedule

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HIGH SCHOOL/GOLF

DODEA Pacific weekend peek

Wrestlers get a chance to Rumble on Saturday

By DAVE ORNAUER

Stars and Stripes

After seven years on the shelf, the Rumble on the Rock tournament is back on the Okinawa mats, with four Far East tournament regulars participating on Saturday at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma.

Kadena, Kubasaki, Humphreys and St. Mary's will be joined by local Japanese wrestlers organizer and Kubasaki coach Brent Cook said. No team title will be handed out; only individual medals, he said.

Humphreys is entering the event for the first time and will have nine wrestlers in tow, coach Ben Pak said.

"We're always seeking experience and better competition," Pak said, adding that this event is early enough in the season to give the Blackhawks a chance to see what they need to work on. "This will, definitely benefit my guys, to work, improve, get better."

That the tournament is in a different environment than they're used to "is always good for wrestlers," St. Mary's coach Shu Yabui said. "And if you can wrestle against wrestlers of different styles and levels, it's even better. Rumble has all of that."

Rumble started in 2006 and ran for seven years at Kubasaki before being canceled in 2013 due to competition limits set by DODEA Pacific. That left only the "Beast of the Far East," at Kinrick as the only invitational.

Humphreys had been scheduled for a quad-meet on Saturday at Osan.

"Of course, we're excited" about Rumble, Cook said. "We get to see how my team

looks and get an idea of how much harder we have to work."

"Beast" is scheduled just two weeks before Far East tournament at Osan, he said, which might not have leave enough time to take what they learn there to prepare for Far East.

Saturday is the last weekend of wrestling among DODEA teams before the winter recess. DODEA Japan schools meet Saturday at Edgren, while Daegu and Seoul Foreign will join Osan for a tri-meet.

One of the bigger surprises in last weekend's DODEA Japan tournament was Zama, which finished sixth in last year's Far East Division II individual tournament and fourth in the dual-meet portion.

The Trojans went 3-1 at Perry and hope to do better at Edgren, coach Guy Snyder said. "We got off to a good start, a huge improvement" over last season, he said. "We have a good core of returning veterans and some pretty talented newcomers."

Veteran Eligh Cabe (junior, 148 pounds) went 3-1 as last weekend's Makao Richardson, at 141. Kaito Hayashi got one of his two wins by pin.

"I can't say that we'll have that weekend every week, but it was a good week," Snyder said.

This weekend is also the last of long-haul basketball road trips for teams in Japan and Korea before the winter break.

In Japan, Edgren's and E.J. King's boys and girls teams play at Kinrick, while Yokota's teams travel to Perry. On the Korea hardwood, Daegu visits Seoul Foreign and Yongsan, and Humphreys travels to Yongsan and Osan.

DODEA Europe marksmanship

Stuttgart shows it's returned to familiar dominating ways

By GREGORY BROOME

Stars and Stripes

The Stuttgart Panthers are competing as much against themselves as with any of their rivals in DODEA Europe marksmanship.

The six-time reigning champions were victorious again Saturday, opening the 2019-20 regular season with a 38-point victory ahead of Vilscek. And after a year of uncharacteristic uncertainty, albeit with the same familiar outcome, the Panthers' aura of invincibility has returned.

The Panthers' runaway 2018 title team was led by established seniors, leaving Stuttgart with an unusually murky outlook at the start of last season. But a new crop of shooters stepped up to hold off a pack of rising European challengers and preserve Stuttgart's dominance.

Having survived what might have been a gap year in its title reign, Stuttgart now returns to the familiar template on which its dynasty is founded.

Proven performers serve as role models for less experienced shooters, even as they protect their own positions on the varsity from those same up-and-comers.

"There are returners who must compete for spots amidst a wave of new talented shooters," Stuttgart coach Raul Pinon said. "It pushes each person to do their best each week. They are pushed to their limits

and must show what they can bring to the match and the team as a whole."

That dynamic was evident in Saturday's season debut.

Returning shooter Kayla Boudreaux, who didn't rank among the Panthers' top four at last year's European championship meet, demonstrated what Pinon called her "remarkable improvement" with a first-place individual finish. Her total score of 289 points put her three points ahead of teammate Salome Cook, who finished second in last year's championship meet, and five points in front of Maria Tortorelli, the defending European champion.

The evidence of a system that's working exactly as designed, Pinon said it's been "easy to integrate new shooters" into the program given the generosity of its stars, who happily "shared their knowledge" with the newer recruits.

"Cook and Tortorelli began this season with a better understanding of what a shooter must be," Pinon said. "And their successes have filtered down to all the members of the team."

The marksmanship season continues Saturday with meets at Alconbury and Vilscek before the holiday break. The schedule resumes Jan. 11, leading up to the calendar year's first DODEA Europe championship event Feb. 11 at Kaiserslautern.

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ANDY BROWNELL/AP

U.S. team player Justin Thomas plays from a bunker on No. 2 Thursday during a Presidents Cup match at the Royal Melbourne Golf Club in Melbourne, Australia.

Presidents Cup

Internationals rallying around only previous win

By DOUG FERGUSON

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Ernie Els wanted to inspire his International team at the Presidents Cup, and he found the one guy that might do the trick.

Then again, there wasn't a lot to choose from.

Els is the lone person on this team, including his four assistants, who was at Royal Melbourne in 1998 for the only International victory. They took the lead after the opening session and never were challenged the rest of the way. At the time, it was the biggest loss an American team had ever endured.

"I watched a couple times because I love it," said C.T. Pan, one of seven rookies on the International team who certainly didn't play like one Thursday. "It's been 21 long years. I know it's day one, we still have a lot of work to do. That video definitely pumped and excited everyone on the International team."

It sure looked that way.

Tiger Woods did his part, at least as a player. The first playing captain in 25 years, he opened with two birdies for a 2-0 lead and finished with two more birdies as he and Justin Thomas won the opening fourballs match at Royal Melbourne.

And then he resumed his role as captain and watched the International team post one victory after another, hitting all the right shots in the two matches that went to the 18th hole.

When it was over, the International team had a 4-1 lead, its first time in front since 2005.

"I didn't envision 4-1, no," Els said. "So it's a nice start. We haven't had a start like this for many, many years."

That was the extent of his optimism, as much as Els would allow himself. He already was looking ahead to the five matches of foursomes on Friday, an American strength while winning the last seven times. During that stretch, the Americans have outscored the International team 5.5

to 22.5 in foursomes.

At Royal Melbourne in 1998, the International team had an 8-2 advantage in the alternate-shot format.

More memories. More hope.

On the first tee for the start Thursday was Craig Parry and Carlos Francos, two players from the 1998 team. All were invited to take part in these matches, a reminder of what can happen. Half of the team was able to make the long trip.

"It was great to see the guys in '98 giving us a bit of advice and how it felt for them starting the week back then, and what it feels like winning a Cup," Louis Oosthuizen said. "We have a few boys of '98 in the team room, as well, and I think we are in a really good place. But we are set on what we want to do. We have a massive goal."

Els stuck to his plan, which is geared around analytics. Even a resounding start was not enough to tempt the International captain to keep partnerships that were so successful in the opening session. He broke them all up, just like he planned.

Abraham Ancer and Oosthuizen birdied the first five holes for a 4-up lead that Dustin Johnson and Gary Woodland could not overcome in a 4-and-3 final. Adam Scott and Byeong Hun An — the replacement for Jason Day — never trailed in beating Tony Finau and Bryson DeChambeau. Hideki Matsuyama delivered the clutch putt from 25 feet on the 17th as he and C.T. Pan beat Patrick Reed and Webb Simpson, 1 up.

"We've gone this route, and we keep going," Els said. "The guys played well today in their respective pairings, and tomorrow we've got whatever pairings we have. We'll feel comfortable with them." Just because we lost the session doesn't mean the Cup's over, Woods said. "There's a long way to go. A lot of points available. The guys will regroup and we'll come out tomorrow ready to go."

Els gave his team the same message.

"Keep the jets down," Els said. "There's a long way to go. Don't get too excited. This is a strong team, and they're going to come back strong."

MLB

Source: Rendon, Angels agree on \$245M

Third baseman gets seven-year contract

By RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Third baseman Anthony Rendon and the Los Angeles Angels agreed to a \$245 million, seven-year contract Wednesday, a person with direct knowledge of the deal told The Associated Press.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the agreement had not been announced and was subject to a successful physical.

Rendon gets a \$4 million signing bonus payable by Dec. 31 and salaries of \$25.5 million next season, \$27.5 million in 2021, \$36 million in 2022 and \$38 million each year from 2023-26. He would receive a \$250,000 bonus for World Series MVP, \$150,000 for League Championship Series MVP, \$125,000 for election as an All-Star starter and \$100,000 for selection as a reserve.

Rendon is the third prized free agent to strike a big-money deal at this week's baseball winter meetings. He'll join three-time MVPs Mike Trout and Albert Pujols on a team that's made just one postseason appearance in the past decade.

The Angels had missed out on free agent right-hander Gerrit Cole, who agreed to a record \$324 million, nine-year contract with the New York Yankees on Tuesday night, a person familiar with the deal told the AP.

"With our flexibility, if we miss a big player, there (are) still very talented players that are accessible in the free-agent and trade market right now," Angels general manager Billy Eppler said earlier Wednesday.

Rendon, who has played all seven of his major league seasons with Washington, drove in a career-best 126 runs while helping the Nationals capture the franchise's



DAVID J. PHILLIP/AP

Washington Nationals third baseman Anthony Rendon throws out the Houston Astros' George Springer during the third inning of Game 6 of the World Series. Rendon and the Los Angeles Angels agreed to a \$245 million, seven-year contract Wednesday.

first World Series championship this year. His 19.9 Wins Above Replacement, per FanGraphs, over the past four seasons trails only Trout, Boston's Mookie Betts and Milwaukee's Christian Yelich among position players.

Rendon is the latest big signing by owner Arte Moreno, following Pujols, Shohei Ohtani, Josh Hamilton and C.J. Wilson.

"We're within some structure of a budget and a payroll forecast that you rela-

tively want to be near and then we just take those opportunities to Arte and see if he'll grant us the permission to do those things," Eppler said. "There (are) good players out there and players that warrant some sizeable contracts. I know the players that he likes."

Rendon follows Bryce Harper as a homegrown star in Washington to leave via free agency — Harper signed a \$330 million, 13-year deal with the Philadelphia Phillies

last March. The Nationals had remained in contact with the 29-year-old Rendon's representatives Wednesday, according to general manager Mike Rizzo.

"The third-base market specifically is an active market," Rizzo said. "There are several teams that are in the market for that particular position. I think it will move fairly rapidly, not only in the free-agent market but in the trade market I think we'll see some activity."



DAVID BANKS, GETTY IMAGES/TNS

The Los Angeles Angels' Shohei Ohtani is greeted by teammates after hitting a three-run home run against the Chicago White Sox on Sept. 7. Ohtani is recovering from Tommy John surgery.

Ohtani's throwing program at top of franchise's agenda

By JANIE MCCAULEY
Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Once Shohei Ohtani completes the final phase of his recovery from Tommy John surgery later this month, the Los Angeles Angels will confer with surgeon Dr. Neal ElAttrache and the team's medical staff to determine how to proceed with the Japanese two-way star's throwing program.

Ohtani threw another bullpen session Wednesday and has worked up to about 50 pitches, general manager Billy Eppler said. The team may decide to keep pushing him from the mound or flat ground, but he may also take time off before ramping up again for spring training.

"The first step is going to be get through what he needs to get through and then talk to Dr. ElAttrache and talk to our medi-

cal personnel and come up with a plan," Eppler said. "He's throwing now at this time of year at more intensity than other pitchers are and other starters."

"So my question that I'm going to ask is going to be: 'What's best for Shohei? Is it to just continue throwing, is it to continue throwing on a mound, continue throwing flat ground? Stop, rest, start back up?' So I'm going to explore that, but I'm going to wait until we get through this and then I'll know a little bit more about how to utilize him."

Ohtani is throwing at 85%, and the Angels would like him to reach about 90%. Eppler said some pitchers on the staff will have their innings monitored — Ohtani likely one of them — without offering specifics at this stage. He does plan to keep Ohtani pitching once a week and hitting four days a week if all goes well.

"If he can do that, then that would be the usage plan," Eppler said. "I don't want to take additional risk on a guy who is right back from a UCL reconstruction. I don't want to introduce additional risk, clearly at the outset of the season. I don't think that's a mindful thing to do."

The 25-year-old Ohtani had surgery on his left kneecap in September, but the reconstructed elbow is most concerning for the Angels.

Ohtani got back on the mound last week and pitched a bullpen session in front of new pitching coach Mickey Callaway in Anaheim on Monday.

The 2018 AL Rookie of the Year finished his second major league season batting .286 with 18 homers and 62 RBIs in 106 games as the Angels' designated hitter.

AP baseball writer Ronald Blum contributed to this report.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL



MARCO GARCIA/AP

Army quarterback Kelvin Hopkins Jr. looks to pass against Hawaii last month in Honolulu.

Legacy: Hopkins won over West Point with personality

FROM BACK PAGE

All these years later, Hopkins has memorized one of the most complex offensive playbooks in college football. He is most renowned in West Point for being the first quarterback in program history to rush and pass for 1,000 yards apiece. Among his teammates, though, he may be better known for his genial disposition and winsome smile.

"He's funny," said wide receiver Camden Harrison, whose connection with Hopkins on the field this season has been constant. "He's fun to be around, and you can always count on him to have your back."

If last year was proof that hard work pays off, this season for Hopkins has been a lesson that sometimes playing don't work as expected. He's been knocked out of multiple games with injuries, missed several contests and fallen short on last-minute game-winning drives. "It's been a challenge for me," Hopkins said.

If he is healthy enough to start in Philadelphia on Saturday when Army tries to four-peat against a superior Navy squad, it will be one final opportunity to leave a lasting legacy on an Army program that reached new heights with Hopkins under center. And despite a senior year that has been far less remarkable than the one before, Hopkins' value as a leader and mentor has only grown.

As a child, Hopkins was the kid who spoke up when something needed to be said, but otherwise tried to avoid the spotlight.

"Flip-flop a lot," he confessed. "I like to be social, but sometimes I like to be by myself off to the side, in the corner, in the background sometimes, too."

Hopkins takes pride in the fact that Charlotte is "a big melting pot of people. All types of races. All types of classes." He said growing up in an area with a wide range of life experiences prepared him to thrive in a place like West Point, where he's in classes with students from places like Honduras and Japan. It also helped him relate to a football team composed of a diverse pool of athletes from all over the country.

Hopkins said he doesn't discriminate, even when it comes to his music preference. "Drake, Florence and the Machine, Maggie Rogers, Pusha T. All that. I love it all."

He also loves talking about food. Hopkins conducted his first interview after spring practice with a bowl of Frosted Mini-Wheats in hand. He spent a day during a bye week driving uninitiated teammates more than 100 miles to introduce them to the glory of Waffle House. It was an adventure, much like the one Hopkins has been on as a cadet.

Fullback Connor Slomka surmises that Hopkins was a sixth-string quarterback when he arrived in West Point, typical just by the sheer number of athletes on Army's roster. What's atypical is Hopkins' gradual rise through the ranks, from afterthought to program-altering star.

"He's been a lot of things," Slomka said, referring to the quarterback's uplifting personality as well as his versatility as a passer in a run-based offense.

Slomka calls it "a cinematic story. He's worked his way up."

Much like Hopkins' favorite movie, "The Sixth Sense," the quarterback, if healthy, has the potential to shock the audience with a season finale few may see coming, considering the struggles Army has endured all year. He may not start — said head coach Jeff Monken on Tuesday of his quarterbacks, "We're going to have the guys available that are available" — but if he does, he'll be in a unique position leading the underdog Black Knights (5-7) against a Midshipmen program that has coasted to a 9-2 record.

This week, Hopkins seems unfazed by all of it. The pressure. The expectations. A lesser man might wince and mope through a final collegiate season marred by injury and defeat. Not Hopkins. He sees a bigger picture, the one that began with a kid who never dreamed he could make it here.

"If you would've asked me in second grade where I thought I would be," Hopkins said, "definitely wouldn't have been at a place like West Point."

Leader: Perry has undergone dramatic evolution

FROM BACK PAGE

Fast forward five years later and Jasper marvels at the Malcolm Perry he sees on the Navy football sideline. There is Perry exhorting teammates to stop worrying about what went wrong on the previous possession and focus on improving the next. Here is Perry telling Jasper what the defense is doing and suggesting some plays that might work.

"Seeing how far Malcolm has come, both as a player and a person, has been very rewarding for me personally," Jasper said. "Malcolm is so much more commanding on the sideline. He's provided a strong leadership presence and really taken control of the offense. Malcolm has gone from a kid who didn't say much to one that speaks up and is assertive."

Watching from the stands at Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium, Bonny Perry has seen the dramatic evolution as well.

"I see Malcolm on the sideline hyping people up and I almost can't believe it. He has never been like that before," Bonny Perry said of her youngest son. "I remember a game this season when Malcolm scored a touchdown, then flipped the ball to the referee. He's never done anything like that before. I agree with Coach Jasper, Malcolm has grown and changed a lot."

Malcolm Perry has always been a fierce competitor who tried to lead by example, but motivating teammates verbally was never his style.

"Malcolm has been playing football since the age of 8 and all his coaches have wanted him to be more vocal, and he just wouldn't do it," Bonny said. "Malcolm knew the other kids weren't as motivated, weren't as serious as he was. Malcolm knew he couldn't instill those traits with words, so he just tried to show the way."

Malcolm Xiomar Perry is the youngest of six children born to parents who were both career United States Army. Malcolm Maurice Perry set his future wife because they both worked in logistics at Fort Campbell, which straddles the Kentucky-Tennessee border.

Maurice Perry worked in refueling operations for 21 years, was very comfortable around the military and knew first-hand what it could do for your future," Perry said. "I saw some of the cool things you can do in the military and the way you could provide for your family."

Perry will forever be part of Navy football folklore because of the bizarre circumstances of his collegiate debut. Starting quarterback Tago Smith suffered a season-ending injury during the 2016 opener against Fordham and backup Will Worth took over. Unbeknownst to anyone else in attendance at Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium that day, third



ERIC CHRISTIAN SMITH/AP

Navy quarterback Malcolm Perry runs against Houston last month. Perry currently ranks third all-time at Navy with 3,842 career rushing yards, trailing record-setting quarterback Keenan Reynolds (4,559, 2012-2015) and Napoleon McCallum (4,179, 1981-85).

string quarterback Zach Abeys had been suspended due to a violation of team rules. Jasper sent word down from the press box for a member of the equipment staff to "find Malcolm" and get him suited up.

Perry marched into the stadium that early September day along with the Brigade of Midshipmen and was sitting in the stands in his dress whites. He wound up getting into the game and directing a touchdown drive.

"It was a pretty amazing way to get my first college playing experience," he admitted. Perry has been the catalyst of an offense that leads the nation in rushing average (360.8 yards per game) and ranks ninth in scoring (39.3 points). He is only the fifth quarterback in Navy history to rush and pass for more than 1,000 yards in a single season.

Perry has accounted for 2,527 yards and 25 touchdowns from scrimmage. He needs 88 yards to break the season record for rushing (1,587 yards), which was set way back in 1983 by legendary tailback Napoleon McCallum.

Perry currently ranks third all-time at Navy with 3,842 career rushing yards, trailing re-

cord-setting quarterback Keenan Reynolds (4,559, 2012-2015) and Napoleon McCallum (4,179, 1981-85).

"Coming here and hearing about all the legends of Navy football like Joe Bellino, Roger Staubach, Napoleon McCallum and Keenan Reynolds... to be put in the same conversation with any of them is a tremendous honor and very humbling," Perry said.

About the only item missing from Perry's impressive résumé is a victory over archrival Army. He was dressed and stood on the sidelines as a plebe when the Black Knights snapped the historic 14-game winning streak the Midshipmen had in the series.

Perry started at quarterback in 2017 when Navy lost a 14-13 heartbreaker, then led the team in rushing from the slotback position in an equally crushing 17-10 defeat in 2018.

"I really can't put into words how huge that would be for the seniors, the entire football team and the Naval Academy as a whole," Perry said of ending a three-game losing streak to Army. "It could change the way I think about my entire career here at the Naval Academy."

COLLEGE BASKETBALL/COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Senior-less Syracuse struggles at the start

By JOHN KEKIS
Associated Press

Syracuse coach Jim Boeheim isn't used to this — nine games into the season his Orange are barely above .500.

With no seniors and five freshmen on the roster and apparent weaknesses on the floor, the Orange (5-4) were no match for defending national champion Virginia to open the season — a 48-34 loss, the fewest points for a Syracuse team in Boeheim's long tenure. Syracuse lost to Oklahoma State, Penn State and Iowa in a recent seven-day span, each by double digits.

That gave Boeheim the worst start (4-4) since he took over the program in 1976. The team beat Georgia Tech on Saturday.

"Obviously, our young guys just aren't ready yet for top-50 teams," Boeheim said. "The four teams that we lost to are just bigger, stronger and better than we are. It's not like we're playing teams that we should beat. The way we're playing and the way those teams are constructed with upper-class guys, they're just better than we are right now. It's obvious to me that we can play a little better."

"It's tougher to lose two or three games in a row anytime, but you just have to keep playing. I think we will improve."

On the season, the Orange's zone defense has been decent despite the use of four freshmen in almost every game. Syracuse ranks 68th in scoring defense (63.3 points per game) and is holding opponents to 28.2% on three-pointers. Offensively, the Orange are averaging 72.1 points, 16.9 assists and 13.4 turnovers.

A glaring weakness has been on the glass — Syracuse has a rebounding margin of minus-0.7 — and that's limited the preseason goal of scoring more in transition. Starting center Bourama Sidibe, a 6-foot-10 junior who's been hampered by injuries his entire career at Syracuse, is averaging 6.8 rebounds, 24.5th nationally. That's just ahead of 6-10 forward Marek Dolezal (5.8), who at 185 pounds can't cope too well inside against players like Penn State's Mike Watkins, a double-double machine at 6-9 and 257 pounds. Watkins had 15 points and 16 rebounds in an 85-64 victory over the Orange in the NIT Season Tipoff in Brooklyn as the Nittany

Lions outrebounded Syracuse 57-28.

"We can't rebound the ball and get up the court," Boeheim said. "You can't run without getting some rebounding or getting some turnover situations."

Boeheim counts on his sharp-shooting son Buddy Boeheim and swingman Elijah Hughes, second last season in scoring (13.7), to help on the perimeter like last year. As a freshman last season, Buddy started slowly, finishing 13 non-conference games 8-for-37 (21.6%) from three. But once Atlantic Coast Conference play began, he rose to the challenge of the more difficult competition, shooting 33-for-81 (40.7%) from behind the arc.

Despite that performance and the confidence gained from being tabbed a starter this year, Buddy has started slowly again. In the recent string of losses, he was just 5-for-20 on three despite some good looks. Hughes ranks third in the ACC in scoring (19.6) and is shooting 43.8% from long range after a scintillating performance in the 97-63 rout at Georgia Tech — six threes and a career-high 33 points.

"You have to play with confidence, whether you're a freshman, sophomore, junior or senior or even a grad student," said freshman Jo Girard III, who has started seven straight games at point guard in place of injured sophomore Jalen Carey. "That's the name of the game. Mindset is the name of the game in basketball. You can't go in too high or too low."

Buddy excelled against Georgia Tech, hitting six threes for the second time this season and scoring a career-high 26 points.

Girard, who scored 24 points against Seattle in his debut as the starter, had 12 points and six assists with one turnover against the Bison, his best all-around game so far. But Girard, the all-time leading high school scorer in New York state history, has struggled shooting (44-for-45 on threes).

Syracuse visits Georgetown (6-3) on Saturday. The victory over Georgia Tech offers a promising sign, even if the Yellow Jackets were without star point guard Jose Alvarado. It came against a Power Five team; the Orange limited the ACC's leading scorer, sophomore guard Michael Devoe (23.8), to 2-for-12 shooting.



A.J. Mast/AP

Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields, right, looks for a receiver during the second half of the team's Big Ten championship defeat of Wisconsin on Saturday.

Fields' competitive advantage

Ohio State quarterback's quiet demeanor belies an innate drive

By BILL RABINOWITZ
Akron Beacon Journal

COLUMBUS, Ohio — There was no breathless celebratory phone call. In fact, no phone call at all. Just one simple emoji.

When Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields was announced as a Heisman Trophy finalist on Monday, his response to his father's congratulatory text message was in character.

"He sent me a fist bump today," Pablo Fields said Tuesday.

That's all. And then they moved on to more pressing things.

"We talked about what he's getting his sisters for Christmas," Pablo said. "That's it. That's how he is. It would sound like we're not close, but that's how Justin is, especially with awards. Justin is a different animal."

Last week when they talked, Pablo said, Fields neglected to tell him that he'd been named Big Ten offensive player of the year. Pablo was stunned to learn the news on the Big Ten Network.

After the Big Ten championship game victory Saturday over Wisconsin, Fields was asked about the Heisman.

"I'm not really worried about the Heisman right now," he said. "I'm just worried about a win in these next two (College Football Playoff) games."

It would be a shocking upset if Fields, Ohio State teammate Chase Young or Oklahoma quarterback Jalen Hurts were to win the Heisman instead of LSU quarterback Joe Burrow, the former Buckeye.

Heisman or not, Fields' season has been brilliant. He has helped lead Ohio State to the playoff by throwing for 10 touchdowns and running for 10. Fields is completing 67.5% of his 308 passes. Only

'He's humble. But deep inside there's a fiery, competitive dude in there who just tries to take your heart out when he's in the game.'

Ohio State football coach Ryan Day
On quarterback Justin Fields

one has been intercepted.

Consider that a year ago Fields was a freshman backup at Georgia, and his story is even more remarkable. He entered the transfer portal late last December and enrolled at Ohio State in early January.

He knew first-year coach Ryan Day a little from a last-ditch recruiting effort when Fields was the No. 2 overall prospect in the 2018 class. But Fields didn't know the other coaches, his new teammates, the playbook, the university or Columbus.

Yet he was immediately thrust into the spotlight as the successor to Dwayne Haskins Jr., a Heisman finalist last year. It was a lot for a shy, homesick 19-year-old to handle.

At first, Fields wanted to return to Georgia. He agreed to give it more time after a phone call with his dad. But it was a rough first few months. He returned home to the Atlanta suburb of Kennesaw often, or his father came to Columbus.

Gradually, Fields felt at ease. But he remained a bit of a mystery. The talent was obvious. But he was careful not to step on toes, wanting to earn respect with work, not words.

The Buckeyes routed every opponent through 10 games, and it wasn't until a tough season-ending stretch in which Fields played

through a knee sprain that even Day got the true sense of his player's mettle.

"I think his family has done a tremendous job of grounding him," Day said. "He has a tremendous approach. He's humble. But deep inside there's a fiery, competitive dude in there who just tries to take your heart out when he's in the game."

"He's got an interesting demeanor about him — very smooth. You don't see much on the surface. But he's very, very competitive. That's something I didn't know about him until he started playing in these big games."

Fields' father has long known about Justin's competitiveness.

When Justin was little, they'd compete to see who could fasten his seat belt faster. If Justin lost, he'd cry. Father and son used to race each other. Their last race was when Justin was about 10, Pablo won, but it was close enough that he knew Justin would probably beat him the next time.

"I was smart enough never to race him again," Pablo said.

Now Pablo watches Justin play basketball against his 13-year-old sister with the same fierceness.

"I don't want my 6-3, 235-pound boy posting up my baby girl and knocking her on the ground," he said with a laugh. "But that's just the cloth we're cut from."

Top 25 games on AFN



No. 10 Oregon (7-2)
at No. 5 Michigan (8-2)
AFN-Sports
2 a.m. Sunday CET
10 a.m. Sunday JKT



No. 13 Memphis (8-1)
at No. 19 Tennessee (7-1)
AFN-Sports2
5 a.m. Sunday CET
1 p.m. Sunday JKT

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Four who are playing for keeps

Breaking down the finalists for the Heisman Trophy, to be awarded Saturday



JOE BURROW

Senior, QB, LSU

BIO: His feel-good story is well-known by now. He grew up hoping to play for Nebraska, like his father and two brothers, but the Cornhuskers never showed interest. So he started his career at Ohio State, which offered a scholarship because then-offensive coordinator Tom Herman prodded Urban Meyer. He appeared in nine games for the Buckeyes, always in the shadows of J.T. Barrett and Dwayne Haskins Jr. When he didn't win the starting job in the spring of 2018, and with his business degree in hand, he transferred to LSU with two years of eligibility. Now, having led LSU to the SEC championship and No. 1 seed in the College Football Playoff, he is poised to become the school's second Heisman winner, and first since Billy Cannon in 1959.

KEY STATS: His 4,715 passing yards and nation-leading 48 touchdown passes are Southeastern Conference records. He has had five TD passes in a game three times and has thrown for 300 yards or more in a school-record seven straight games. He is the most accurate passer in the country, at 77.9%, and has thrown just six interceptions.

BEST GAME: He stamped himself the Heisman front-runner with his performance against Alabama in November. On the biggest possible regular-season stage — LSU was No. 1, Alabama No. 2 — he completed 31 of 39 passes for 393 yards and three touchdowns with no interceptions in the 46-41 win that snapped the Tigers' eight-game skid in the series.

BEFORE COLLEGE: A four-star recruit by 247Sports, Burrow led Athens (Ohio) High School to three straight state playoff appearances and to each of the school's seven all-time playoff wins. Burrow was Ohio Mr. Football in 2014 after throwing for nearly 4,500 yards with 63 touchdowns and two interceptions.

DRAFT STOCK: He has gone from being regarded as a middle-rounder at the start of the season to a possible No. 1 overall pick. His extremely high football IQ, toughness and underdog mentality make up for arm strength that, by NFL standards, is not considered elite.

THE SKINNY: No one could have predicted his incredible rise. He was good enough, not great, in his first year as the Tigers' starter. Enter Joe Brady, hired as passing game coordinator in January after two years with the New Orleans Saints. Brady, who this week won the Broyles Award as the nation's top assistant, and offensive coordinator Steve Ensminger added run-pass options to the spread offense. Surrounded by high-grade talent, Burrow has done nothing but flourish.



JUSTIN FIELDS

Sophomore, QB, Ohio State

BIO: Fields was one of the most highly recruited players in the nation two years ago, so high expectations always follow him. He has exceeded them at Ohio State after spending his freshman year at Georgia. Not excited about the prospect of sitting behind Jake Fromm for another season, he knew he would have a chance to play at Ohio State with Dwayne Haskins Jr. heading to the NFL after last season. He was named the Associated Press Big Ten offensive player of the year and led the 13-0 Buckeyes to a conference championship and No. 2 seed in the College Football Playoff.

KEY STATS: Nothing stands out more than his 40 touchdown passes against just one interception, by far the best ratio in the nation. He has accounted for 50 touchdowns, four shy of the Big Ten record Haskins set last year. His total offense average of 263.4 yards per game ranks first in the conference.

BEST GAME: Fields passed for 300 yards for the second time and threw a career high-lying four touchdowns as the Buckeyes hammered then-No. 10 Michigan 56-27 on the road. His signature play of the season came in the third quarter after he gingerly walked off the field to get his left knee evaluated in the medical tent. He returned to the game, and on the first snap he scrambled and threw a 30-yard touchdown pass to Garrett Wilson.

BEFORE COLLEGE: A consensus five-star recruit in 2018, he was ranked as the No. 1 dual-threat quarterback prospect and No. 2 player overall. He was the MVP of the 2017 Elite 11 quarterback competition. He accounted for 69 touchdowns and 6,283 yards of total offense at Harrison High in Kennesaw, Ga., and he was named the 2018 Mr. Georgia Football. He also played shortstop and second base for his high school baseball team and was considered a pro prospect in that sport.

DRAFT STOCK: Fields isn't eligible to be drafted until 2021, and the argument already has started over whether he or Clemson's Trevor Lawrence will be the first quarterback taken.

THE SKINNY: Fields' success is no surprise given his pedigree coming out of high school. He landed in a perfect spot. It was apparent last spring Fields would win the starting job, and he has shown remarkable consistency for a relatively young player. He has completed better than 70% of his passes in six games, improved throwing the deep ball as the season progressed and proved dangerous as a runner when plays break down. If he doesn't win the Heisman on Saturday, look for him to be back in New York this time next year.



CHASE YOUNG

Junior, DE, Ohio State

BIO: Young is arguably the best defensive lineman in college football since Nebraska's Ndumukong Suh, a Heisman finalist in 2009. The Buckeyes have been blessed with star linemen in recent years — Joey and Nick Bosa were top three NFL picks — but none have produced at the level of Young. He had an 11-game sack streak dating to last season, highlighted by a four-sack game against Wisconsin in October that thrust him into the top tier of Heisman candidates. He has 30.5 sacks in three years, and his average of 1.5 per game this season is the highest since Elvis Dumervil of Louisville averaged 1.7 in 2005. He was suspended two games this season for an NCAA rules violation connected to a loan from a family friend in 2017.

KEY STATS: Young's school-record 16.5 sacks, in 11 games, lead the nation and are the most by a Big Ten player in 21 years. He is first in the nation in tackles for loss per game (1.91) and tied for fourth with 21 tackles for loss, including 16 solo, for minus-129 yards (second-best in the country).

BEST GAME: Young was a force like never before in the Buckeyes' 38-7 regular-season win over Wisconsin. He tied a school record with four sacks and forced two fumbles that led to Ohio State touchdowns. He finished with six tackles, all solo, and five of them were behind the line of scrimmage.

BEFORE COLLEGE: The Cheltenham, Md., native was a consensus five-star recruit and ranked among the top 10 players in the nation after helping DeMatha High to a conference championship in 2016. He made 118 tackles and 37 tackles for loss, including 19 sacks, as a senior. He chose Ohio State over Alabama and Maryland.

DRAFT STOCK: He is in line to be the first player taken if the team drafting first — right now it's the Cincinnati Bengals — doesn't take a quarterback. NFL teams covet his combination of speed and power. He is also an effective run stopper. For all he has done as a pass-rusher in college, he still has a high ceiling.

THE SKINNY: Of the 159 Heisman finalists since 1982, Young is the 19th defensive player and first since Michigan's Jabril Peppers in 2016. The only defensive player to win college football's top award was Michigan cornerback Charles Woodson in 1997. Even if Young doesn't win, he will take home plenty of hardware in coming days. He has already won the Bronko Nagurski Trophy as the nation's top defensive player and is a finalist for the Maxwell Award, Walter Camp Award and Chuck Bednarik Award, among others.



JALEN HURTS

Senior, QB, Oklahoma

BIO: Hurts led Oklahoma to national championship games as a freshman and sophomore. He was ineffective against Clemson in the second of those games. He was benched after halftime and watched Tua Tagovailoa lead the Crimson Tide to the title. Hurts was relegated to backup in 2018 but helped the Tide make it back to the title game when he replaced an injured Tagovailoa in the fourth quarter of the SEC championship game and rallied the Tide to victory. Then it was off to Oklahoma, where he has become the latest in a line of Heisman finalists.

KEY STATS: Hurts became the third FBS player to record 3,000 passing yards and 1,000 rushing yards by the 11th game of a season, and he joined 2007 Heisman winner Tim Tebow as the only players since 1996 with at least 32 passing TDs and 18 rushing TDs. Hurts leads the nation in points responsible for per game (23.7) and touchdowns accounted for (51). He has 4,889 yards of total offense (3,634 passing, 1,255 rushing).

BEST GAME: The regular-season game at Baylor, which could also have been Hurts' worst. He fumbled and threw an interception in the first half, setting up Baylor touchdowns, and in the third quarter he fumbled at the Bears' 3. He then threw three of his four touchdown passes during a school-record 25-point comeback in the second half and also rushed 27 times for 114 yards in the 34-31 win that kept alive OU's playoff hopes.

BEFORE COLLEGE: The Houston native was a consensus four-star recruit and the nation's top-ranked dual-threat quarterback in 2016. He played at Channelview High, where his father, Averion, was his head coach. He drew offers from Alabama and three other SEC schools after passing for 2,384 yards and 26 touchdowns as a senior.

DRAFT STOCK: NFL analysts don't agree on where Hurts fits in. He is projected anywhere from the second to fifth rounds. Lincoln Riley has coached the last two No. 1 overall picks, so it is a plus that Hurts has played a year in the OU system. Hurts' playmaking ability makes him an intriguing prospect, but he is still developing as a passer and he sometimes gets careless with the ball.

THE SKINNY: Hurts' comeback story is right up there with the Burrow saga. At Alabama he was the celebrated starter for two years and then the good-soldier backup for Tagovailoa. After a change of scenery, he is back on top. His eye-popping OU debut against Houston created the momentum that has made him a Heisman finalist. He gives the Sooners a chance for a third straight Heisman winner, but it's an outside chance.

— Eric Olson, Associated Press

NFL

League executive: Interference rules have caused 'angst'

By SCHUYLER DIXON
Associated Press

IRVING, TEXAS — Amid the concern and controversy over coaches' challenges and video reviews of pass interference, the NFL plans a hard look at the rules adjustment instituted this season.

The change was for the 2019 season only and the 32 team owners would have to ratify it again — on a temporary or permanent basis — for it to be continued. Thus far, inconsistencies in how the penalties are being called and with decisions made after video reviews have plagued the system.

"There's no question there's been angst," Rich McKay, president of the Atlanta Falcons and head of the NFL's powerful competition committee said Wednesday at the league meetings. "I've felt the angst. I felt the angst with our team, feel the angst of others. But it's a new rule. It's a big change. It's something we haven't done before. So I don't want to prejudice what the outcome could be."

McKay and league football operations chief Troy Vincent said the subject will be "a point of discussion" in the offseason.

"I think from the committee's standpoint, what we typically do is we'll go back and we'll look at every single review and we will look at it from the standpoint as a committee, 'Would we have reversed that? Would we not have reversed that?'" McKay explained. "After you do that, which is what we did last year with use of helmet — I think we looked at 120 use of helmet plays. You get a good sense of, 'Can we do this better? Does this have a path to get better and more efficient and more effective and more predictable? And what are the challenges?'"



ELISE AMENDOLA/AP

Kansas City Chiefs cornerback Kendall Fuller, left, breaks up a pass intended for New England Patriots wide receiver Phillip Dorsett. League officials said the interference rules will be a point of discussion in the offseason.

Commissioner Roger Goodell said "consistency is the number one thing we're always trying to achieve."

"And we every year have engaged in changes that have been designed to make us more consistent and better," Goodell said. "Obviously, the standard keeps getting higher as we add new elements. But I think what people see nowadays with technology is much greater than it was even five years ago."

"I think our officials do an outstanding job, but we always seek to improve and we will engage in that. We have engaged in that. And I promise you that will continue."

Vincent emphasized that his job is to evaluate all officiating matters.

"My role is to gather all the information and evaluate it, myself included," he said.

In other topics:

■ Goodell said the league wouldn't make any judgments until the investigation is complete into the New England Patriots inappropriately filming the Cincinnati sideline during Sunday's game in Cleveland.

The club has acknowledged that a three-person crew producing a web series titled "Do Your Job" didn't properly inform the Browns. The Patriots said they turned over all the footage to the league after being confronted. New England plays at the Bengals on Sunday.

■ Goodell said owners discussed the ongoing negotiations for a new labor agreement for about an hour but didn't have much else to report. The collective bargaining agreement expires in March 2021.



D. ROSS CAMERON/AP

Tennessee Titans quarterback Ryan Tannehill, top, celebrates with teammates after throwing a touchdown pass to wide receiver A.J. Brown against the Oakland Raiders on Sunday.

Tipping point: Titans' Tannehill triggers an offensive turnaround

By TERESA M. WALKER
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Ryan Tannehill has done exactly what the Tennessee Titans hoped he would when they made him their starting quarterback.

They have scored at least 30 points in four straight games, the franchise's longest streak since 2003. And though the Titans are coming off a game where they averaged more yards per play than any other NFL game this season, they still see plenty of room for improvement.

"There's definitely things we can clean up some games more than others," Tannehill said Wednesday. "You go back and look at the tape, there's always things we can be better at, plays that we missed. Conversions that we should've had, maybe a block on the backside of a run or a throw location could've been better, a route could've been better."

Some might say they're nipping-and-tucking, but the Titans (8-5) are working to fix those mistakes — which concern Tannehill.

"The same mistake next game could hurt us," he said, "so we definitely want to clean those things up."

Only the Baltimore Ravens (35.1) have scored more points in the NFL over the past eight weeks than the Titans — who are averaging 31.4 points per game in that span. All the scoring has helped Tennessee win four straight and six of its last seven and turn Sunday's game with Houston (8-5) into a showdown for the top of the AFC South.

Everyone on the Titans' roster is getting into the scoring act, too. The defense has scored a touch-

By the numbers

31.4

Points per game the last eight weeks for the Titans, second only to the Baltimore Ravens over the same period.

4

Consecutive games Tennessee has scored 31 or more points this season.

118.5

Ryan Tannehill's league-leading passer rating.

SOURCE: Associated Press

down three times this season, the last with linebacker Jayron Brown picking up a fumble and running 46 yards for the clinching TD in last week's 42-21 victory in Oakland. Linebacker Rashaan Evans returned a fumble Nov. 10 in a win over Kansas City.

Brown returned a fumble forced by Tye Smith, who returned a blocked field goal for a touchdown in a win in Indianapolis on Dec. 1.

"We're all feeding off each other," Brown said. "Special teams is feeding off defense, and the defense is feeding off the offense."

The biggest difference for Tennessee in this scoring outburst in recent weeks has been due to the offense. The Titans had scored only one touchdown in 10 quarters when Tennessee benched Marcus Mariota for Tannehill looking for an offensive spark. The difference in the offense was immediate. The Titans have scored 27 touchdowns in seven games with Tannehill.

"I don't think it's like a secret formula or anything like that," Titans safety Kevin Byard said. "I think guys are just executing a lot better than they were before."

Tannehill not only is second in the NFL completing 73.4% of his passes, he leads the league with a 118.5 passer rating. Derrick Henry ranks second with 1,243 yards rushing, and he's averaging 5 yards a carry to give Tennessee a serious threat on play-action. Rookie wide receiver A.J. Brown leads the team with 39 catches for 779 yards and six touchdowns.

Trying to slow down or stop the Titans has kept the Texans' coaching staff busy the past couple days. Houston coach Bill O'Brien says the Titans are doing a great job with the offense and the design with Tannehill executing.

"He's a good football player," O'Brien said. "He's accurate, very accurate. He's been accurate his whole career. He's making really good decisions with the ball, he's getting them into the right play, out of a bad play, he can run, he's very athletic. He's playing really well."

NFL



CHARLES REX ARBOGAST/AP

Chicago Bears quarterback Mitchell Trubisky looks for a receiver against the Dallas Cowboys on Dec. 5 in Chicago.

Confidence growing for Bears' Trubisky

Associated Press

LAKE FOREST, Ill. — Confidence has placed Mitchell Trubisky and the Chicago Bears offense in a far better situation than at midseason. Or even the beginning of the season.

They have to hope it's enough for them to compete with the Green Bay Packers on Sunday at Lambeau Field. If not, the remainder of their season will lack much meaning.

Trubisky is riding high during a three-game winning streak and no longer feels he's operating an offense mired at the bottom of the NFL rankings — even if that's where the Bears are.

"I just feel like we have a new-found identity of what we want to do, and everybody is really locked into what they have to do within their job description on the offense," Trubisky said Wednesday at Halas Hall. "We've just got to go out there and play hard and play hungry and come ready to play and execute what we've got to do."

Trubisky described the offense as moving freer than in the early portion of the schedule, especially the season-opening 10-3 loss to the Packers. He's at a bit of a loss to describe why the whole offense is no longer pressing.

"You have a bunch of people, including myself, that care so much and you don't know what's going wrong that you tend to press a little bit when things are going wrong," he said. "But you've just got to trust the process and trust the plan and what we're doing here and continue to get better."

Trubisky has completed 77 of 110 passes (70%) for 860 yards, seven touchdowns, four interceptions and has a passer rating of 99.1 in the three straight victories.

Wide receiver Anthony Miller has seen the confidence growing

in his quarterback with the wins over the New York Giants, Detroit Lions and last week over the Dallas Cowboys.

"Whenever we go out there, we know exactly what we're supposed to do each and every play," said Miller who has 24 receptions for 313 yards and a touchdown in the last four games. "Mitch's confidence is through the roof right now. And so we're just taking advantage of that."

Coach Matt Nagy cited some changes made in the attack as part of the improvement, without wanting to get too detailed.

"Probably maybe a little just because we were searching, we were really searching for many different reasons," Nagy said. "I told you we're problem solvers, we're looking for solutions. And we feel like we may have found some things, whatever that is and we'll kind of just go with that without getting into schemes."

During a stretch of four wins in five games it's been a total turnaround after a four-game losing streak.

To Trubisky and the offense, the opening loss to Green Bay now seems so long ago. He completed 26 of 45 for 228 yards and an interception while absorbing five sacks in that game.

"There's been a lot of growth for us all, and I think the biggest thing that you (media) would agree with, I believe in, is that we've all grown and become mentally stronger, a lot stronger from then," Nagy said. "That's where we're kind of figured out who we think we are and now we'll get to put it to the test again here against Green Bay."

Injuries played a role to a small extent in their earlier demise,

"I just feel like we're kind of in a rhythm now," Trubisky said. "We're a different team."

Top draft picks Murray, Mayfield ready for duel

By DAVID BRANDT
Associated Press

TEMPE, Ariz. — Baker Mayfield has the moxie and machismo while Kyler Murray prefers to keep things low-key.

The two will always be linked by their similar back stories, similar skill sets and a similar career path, but it's hard to find a pair of NFL quarterbackbacks with more opposite personalities.

"Obviously," Murray said with a grin. "We're a little different."

Even so, the two friends are in total agreement that there's a little something extra on the line when Mayfield's Cleveland Browns travel to face Murray's Arizona Cardinals this weekend.

"This is real bragging rights being in the same quarterback room for a few years and just razzing each other back and forth," Mayfield said.

"Yeah," Murray said laughing after he heard about Mayfield's comment. "For sure."

The former University of Oklahoma teammates — who are the two most recent No. 1 overall draft picks and Heisman Trophy winners — will have different team stakes on Sunday. The Browns (6-7) need a win to stay in the playoff race while the Cardinals (3-9-1) are simply trying to gain momentum in their rebuild.

But the individual matchup is also intriguing.

The mutual respect between Murray and Mayfield is obvious. They became close after spending two seasons together at Oklahoma in 2016 and 2017 when Mayfield was the starter. Murray red-shirted the first season and was a backup in '17 when Mayfield won his Heisman.

Murray started in 2018 after



RON SCHWANE/AP

Browns quarterback Baker Mayfield, above, was a teammate of Cardinals quarterback Kyler Murray's at Oklahoma.

Mayfield left for the NFL and made it back-to-back Heismans for the Sooners.

Murray said he learned a lot from Mayfield and even made a good-natured crack that the lessons included "what not to do."

"To the public, obviously, he's kind of a rebellious guy," Murray said. "But he's a great dude. I look forward to playing against him."

Both franchises have staked a large portion of their near future to the pair of young quarterbackbacks.

It can be argued that the Browns' willingness to draft Mayfield with the top pick in 2018 helped open the door for Murray.

Mayfield is a little smaller than the typical NFL quarterback at 6-foot-1 and 215 pounds and Murray is a more extreme example at 5-10 and 207 pounds. Mayfield transferred from Texas Tech to Oklahoma during his college career while Murray moved from Texas A&M to the Sooners. Both

grew up in Texas.

Mayfield's thrown for 3,109 yards, 15 touchdowns and 16 interceptions this season while Murray has 3,060 yards, 16 touchdowns and nine interceptions. Both have the ability to extend plays with their feet, though Murray has been more productive on the ground this season, leading the Cardinals with 448 yards rushing and four touchdowns.

Currently, the biggest difference between the two quarterbackbacks is the Browns are winning a few games. Cleveland has won four of its last five to keep its playoff hopes alive.

Arizona has lost six straight. Murray is trying to help the Cardinals climb out of their rut while fixing his own problems — he had three interceptions during the Cardinals' 23-17 loss to the Steelers last week.

AP sports writer Tom Withers in Berea, Ohio, contributed to this story.



ROSS D. FRANKLIN/AP

Kyler Murray tries to elude the grasp of Steelers linebacker Vince Williams on Sunday.

NFL

SACK HUNTER

Vikings' relentless defensive end has blossomed into one of the league's premier pass rushers

By DAVE CAMPBELL
Associated Press

After the Minnesota Vikings knocked down passes on Detroit's first two plays, Danielle Hunter crouched down in his three-point stance on third-and-10 with a tight end lined up to try to block him.

The Lions could hardly have found a faster track to punt. Jesse James had little hope of fending off Hunter long enough for quarterback David Blough to escape harm, and Hunter brought

‘Did we know he was going to have 50 sacks at 25 or something? No, but we felt like we could improve him.’

Mike Zimmer
Vikings coach

tory over Detroit that was fueled by a resurgence by the defense.

With 12½ sacks this season, Hunter is tied for fourth in the league, and he leads the league in quarterback pressures. Hunter, at 25 years and 40 days old, became on Sunday the youngest player in NFL history to reach 50 sacks, doing so 127 days ahead of Robert Quinn's arrival at that milestone in 2015 for the Rams. Hunter has 52½ sacks, already halfway to third place on the franchise's career list. Carl Eller (130), Jim Marshall

25-year-old Vikings DE Danielle Hunter is the youngest player in NFL history to reach 50 sacks, doing so 127 days ahead of Robert Quinn's arrival at that milestone in 2015 for the Rams.

AP photos

(127) and John Randle (114) have the first three spots. Hunter is already 24th among active players in the league, with Terrell Suggs (138) leading the list.

Drafted by the Vikings in 2015 in the third round out of LSU after an unremarkable college career, Hunter has more than affirmed the team's projections that an ideal frame, proven work ethic and humble attitude would translate to NFL success for the 6-foot-5, 252-pound physical marvel.

"Did we know he was going to have 50 sacks at 25 or something?" said Zimmer. "No, but we felt like we could improve him as a pass rusher."

Not many players are blessed with his combination of size, speed and strength, but the preparation and dedication are what has set Hunter apart in the eyes of his appreciative teammates.

"That guy's a workhorse," backup defensive end Ifeadi Odenigbo said. "He's truly a professional. The team would be a lot better if there was more Danielle Hunters around."

Mostert earns lead RB role for Niners

By GRANT COHN
Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — When the 49ers' Raheem Mostert started his NFL career, he was a running back in name only.

He made the final roster primarily to play special teams. He had never been a starting running back, even in college.

Now Mostert is the lead running back on the NFL's second-ranked rushing offense.

But his self-image hasn't changed. He always saw himself as a running back by nature. "You can't look at it as anything other than your position," Mostert said.

Mostert is an excellent special teams player, and until recently the 49ers didn't need him to run the ball. But starting running back Tevin Coleman has averaged just 2.1 yards per carry the past four games, and backup Matt Breida missed three weeks with an

By the numbers

7.4

Average yards per carry over the last three games for San Francisco 49ers RB Raheem Mostert.

SOURCE: Associated Press

ankle injury.

So the 49ers turned to Mostert. And the past three games, he has rushed 35 times for 260 yards, averaged 7.4 yards per carry and scored four touchdowns. He has become one of their most potent playmakers.

"Raheem has earned it these last few weeks," coach Kyle Shanahan said. "We need to give him more opportunities.

He's given us no choice. I'm happy for him. He's been extremely impressive."

Mostert played college football at Purdue, where he carried the ball only 136 times in four years. He primarily was a kick returner and a sprinter on the track team. In 2014, he won gold medals at the Big Ten Indoor Track and Field Championships with a 6.63-second time in the 60-yard dash and a 20.73-second time in the 200-meter dash. He also ran a 4.32 40-yard dash at his pro day.

However, no team drafted Mostert. He signed with the Philadelphia Eagles as an undrafted free agent in 2015, and bounced around the league until he landed with the 49ers in 2016.

"Raheem always has had an impact on special teams," said Atlanta Falcons coach Dan Quinn, who will face the 49ers on Sunday. "But now, out on the perimeter when he gets the ball in his hands, he's a real factor. Sometimes, you need the opportunity, and he definitely has taken advantage of his."



San Francisco 49ers RB Raheem Mostert
BRETT DUKE/AP



NFL



Chicago Bears (7-6)
at Green Bay Packers (10-3)
 AFN-Sports
 7 p.m. Sunday CET
 3 a.m. Monday JKT

Series: Packers lead 97-94-6.

Last meeting: Packers beat Bears 10-3, Sept. 5, 2019.

Notes: Packers have won six of past seven meetings. ... Bears quarterback Mitchell Trubisky passed for three TDs and rushed for another in 31-24 Week 14 victory over Cowboys. ... Rookie running back David Montgomery rushed for 86 yards last week. ... Tight end J.F. Holtz had a career-high 56 receiving yards against Cowboys. ... Linebacker Nick Kwiatkowski led team with a career-high 10 tackles last week. ... Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers passed 286 yards and three TDs in last home meeting. ... Running back Aaron Jones had 192 scrimmage yards (134 rushing, 58 receiving) and a rushing TD in Week 14. ... Linebackers Preston Smith and Darious Smith are only teammates with 10 or more sacks in 2019. ... Linebacker Blake Martinez had a team-high 10 tackles last week.



Los Angeles Rams (8-5)
at Dallas Cowboys (6-7)

AFN-Sports
 10:25 p.m. Sunday CET
 6:25 a.m. Monday JKT

Series: Cowboys lead 13-12.

Last meeting: Rams beat Cowboys 35-30, Oct. 1, 2017.

Notes: Cowboys have won three of past four. ... Rams quarterback Jared Goff passed for 293 yards and two TDs last week in 28-12 victory over Seahawks. ... Running back Todd Gurley had 113 scrimmage yards (79 rushing, 34 receiving) and a rushing TD last week. He needs 111 scrimmage yards for fifth consecutive 1,000-yard season. ... Tight end Tyler Higbee had seven catches for a career-high 116 receiving yards last week. ... Cowboys quarterback Dak Prescott had 334 passing yards and a TD last week in 31-24 loss to Bears. It was his sixth 300-yard game this season. ... Wide receiver Michael Gallup had six receptions for 109 yards in Week 14, his fourth career 100-yard game. Linebacker Jaylon Smith had eight tackles.

WEEK 15 TELEVIEWED GAMES

MARQUEE MATCHUP

Houston Texans (8-5) at Tennessee Titans (8-5)

AFN-Sports2, 7 p.m. Sunday CET; 3 a.m. Monday JKT

SERIES RECORD: Titans lead 18-16.

LAST MEETING: Texans beat Titans 34-17, Nov. 26, 2018.

TEXANS OFFENSE: OVERALL (9), RUSH (7), PASS (10).

TEXANS DEFENSE: OVERALL (25), RUSH (18), PASS (27).

TITANS OFFENSE: OVERALL (18), RUSH (8), PASS (21).

TITANS DEFENSE: OVERALL (19), RUSH (10), PASS (25).

STREAKS, STATS AND

NOTES: Titans have

won two of past three

meetings. ... Texans

coach Bill O'Brien is

7-3 against Titans. ...

Texans quarterback

Deshawn Watson

passed for 292 yards and a TD and rushed for 44 yards and two TDs last week in 38-24 loss to Broncos. ... Running back Carlos Hyde had a team-high 73 rushing yards last week and needs just 74 yards for his first career 1,000-yard rushing season. ... Wide receiver DeAndre Hopkins had seven catches for a season-high 120 yards and a TD last week. ... Tight end Darren Fells is tied for the NFL lead among tight ends with seven receiving TDs this season. ... Linebacker Zach Cunningham tied a career high with 16 tackles and had two forced fumbles last week. ... Titans quarterback Ryan Tannehill completed 21 of 27 passes for 391 yards and three TDs last week in 42-21 rout of Raiders. ... Running back Derrick Henry rushed for 103 yards and two TDs last week. He is tied for the NFL lead with 13 rushing TDs and ranks second with 1,243 rushing yards and four career highs. ... Rookie wide receiver A.J. Brown had five catches for a career-high 153 yards and two TDs last week, the most receiving yards by a rookie in a single game this season. ... Cornerback Logan Ryan led team with nine tackles last week. He is tied for the NFL lead with 17 pass deflections this season.



Houston Texans
 wide receiver
DeAndre Carter

DAVID J. PHILLIP/AP

Game capsules compiled from NFLcommunications.com

EXPANDED STANDINGS

American Conference

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	AFC	NFC	Div
New England	10	3	0	.769	338	168	5-1-0	5-2-0	6-3-0	4-0-0	4-0-0
Buffalo	9	4	0	.692	274	212	4-3-0	5-1-0	6-3-0	3-1-0	3-1-0
N.Y. Jets	5	8	0	.385	226	301	4-3-0	1-5-0	2-7-0	3-1-0	1-4-0
Miami	3	10	0	.231	221	399	2-5-0	1-5-0	2-8-0	1-2-0	1-4-0
South											
Houston	8	5	0	.615	317	309	5-2-0	3-3-0	7-3-0	1-2-0	3-1-0
Tennessee	8	5	0	.615	318	255	4-2-0	4-3-0	6-4-0	2-1-0	2-2-0
Indianapolis	6	7	0	.462	296	295	4-3-0	2-4-0	5-6-0	1-1-0	3-2-0
Jacksonville	4	9	0	.308	230	337	2-5-0	2-4-0	4-6-0	0-3-0	3-4-0
North											
x-Baltimore	11	2	0	.846	430	236	5-1-0	6-1-0	7-2-0	4-0-0	3-1-0
Pittsburgh	8	5	0	.615	259	242	5-2-0	3-3-0	6-3-0	2-2-0	3-2-0
Cleveland	6	7	0	.462	273	351	4-3-0	2-4-0	6-4-0	0-3-0	3-1-0
Cincinnati	1	12	0	.077	198	325	1-5-0	0-7-0	1-8-0	0-4-0	0-5-0
West											
y-Kansas City	9	4	0	.692	371	281	3-3-0	6-1-0	7-3-0	2-1-0	4-0-0
Oakland	6	7	0	.462	258	366	5-2-0	1-5-0	4-5-0	2-2-0	4-0-0
Denver	5	8	0	.385	236	261	3-3-0	2-5-0	5-5-0	0-3-0	2-2-0
L.A. Chargers	5	8	0	.385	289	251	2-4-0	3-4-0	3-7-0	2-1-0	4-0-0

x-clinched playoff spot; y-clinched division

National Conference

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	AFC	NFC	Div
Dallas	6	7	0	.462	334	367	3-3-0	3-4-0	1-3-0	5-4-0	4-0-0
Philadelphia	6	7	0	.462	297	301	4-3-0	2-4-0	2-2-0	4-5-0	2-1-0
Washington	3	10	0	.231	188	310	1-5-0	2-5-0	1-3-0	2-7-0	0-3-0
N.Y. Giants	2	11	0	.154	247	362	1-5-0	1-6-0	0-3-0	2-8-0	1-3-0
South											
y-New Orleans	10	3	0	.769	344	296	5-2-0	5-1-0	2-0-0	8-3-0	4-1-0
Tampa Bay	6	7	0	.462	378	381	2-4-0	4-3-0	2-1-0	4-6-0	2-3-0
Carolina	5	8	0	.385	300	360	2-4-0	3-4-0	3-0-0	2-8-0	1-4-0
Atlanta	4	9	0	.308	300	343	2-5-0	2-4-0	0-3-0	4-6-0	3-2-0
North											
Green Bay	10	3	0	.769	309	270	6-1-0	4-2-0	3-1-0	7-2-0	3-0-0
Minnesota	9	4	0	.692	339	249	6-0-0	3-4-0	2-1-0	7-3-0	2-2-0
Chicago	6	6	0	.538	243	232	4-3-0	3-3-0	1-2-0	6-4-0	3-1-0
Detroit	3	9	1	.269	287	335	2-4-0	1-5-1	1-2-0	2-7-1	0-5-0
West											
San Francisco	11	2	0	.846	397	229	5-1-0	6-1-0	3-1-0	8-1-0	3-1-0
Seattle	10	3	0	.769	341	321	4-2-0	6-1-0	3-1-0	7-2-0	3-1-0
L.A. Rams	8	5	0	.615	311	262	4-4-0	4-2-0	2-2-0	6-3-0	2-2-0
Arizona	3	9	1	.269	272	374	1-5-1	2-4-0	1-2-0	2-7-1	0-4-0

Buffalo Bills (9-4)
at Pittsburgh Steelers (8-5)

AFN-Sports
 2:20 a.m. Monday CET
 10:20 a.m. Monday JKT

Series: Steelers lead 14-8.

Last meeting: Steelers beat Bills 27-20, Dec. 11, 2016.

Notes: Steelers have won past six meetings. ... Steelers coach Mike Tomlin is 4-0 against Bills. ... Bills quarterback Josh Allen passed for 146 yards and a TD last week in 24-17 loss to Ravens. He has 16 rushing TDs since entering league in 2018, the most among quarterbacks. ... Running back Devin Singletary led team with 118 scrimmage yards (89 rushing, 29 receiving) last week. ... Linebacker Tremaine Edmunds had eight tackles and his first interception of the season last week. ... Steelers rookie quarterback Devlin Hodges completed 16 of 19 passes for 152 yards and a TD and rushed for 34 yards last week in 23-17 victory over Cardinals. ... Wide receiver Diontae Johnson led team with six catches for 60 yards and a TD last week. He leads all AFC rookies with 42 receptions this season.



Indianapolis Colts (6-7)
at New Orleans Saints (10-3)

AFN-Sports
 2:15 a.m. Tuesday CET
 10:15 a.m. Tuesday JKT

Series: Saints lead 7-5.

Last meeting: Saints beat Colts 27-21, Oct. 25, 2015.

Notes: Saints have won past two meetings. ... Saints are plus-11 in takeaways/giveaways category this season. ... Colts quarterback Jacoby Brissett passed for 251 yards and two TDs last week in 38-35 loss to Buccaneers. ... Wide receiver T.Y. Hilton had four catches for 150 yards and two TDs in last meeting. ... Wide receiver Marcus Johnson had three catches for a career-high 105 yards and a TD in Week 14. ... Saints quarterback Drew Brees passed for 349 yards and five TDs last week in 48-46 loss to 49ers. He needs three TDs to surpass Peyton Manning (639) for the most in NFL history. ... Wide receiver Michael Thomas had 11 catches for 134 yards and a TD last week. He has seven games with 10 or more catches, tied for the most in a single season in history.

ALSO ON AFN

Denver Broncos (5-8) at Kansas City Chiefs (9-4), AFN-Atlantic, 7 p.m. Sunday CET; 3 a.m. Monday JKT
 Jacksonville Jaguars (4-9) at Oakland Raiders (6-7), AFN-Atlantic, 10 p.m. Sunday CET; 6 a.m. Monday JKT
 Minnesota Vikings (9-4) at Los Angeles Chargers (5-8), AFN-Sports2, 10 p.m. Sunday CET; 6 a.m. Monday JKT

REST OF THE SCHEDULE

Tampa Bay (6-7) at Detroit (3-9-1)
 Miami (3-10) at N.Y. Giants (2-11)
 Seattle (6-7) at Washington (3-9-1)
 New England (10-3) at Cincinnati (1-12)
 Philadelphia (6-7) at Washington (3-9-1)
 Cleveland (6-7) at Arizona (3-9-1)
 Atlanta (4-9) at San Francisco (11-2)

SPORTS



Big-time deal

Angels land prized free-agent third baseman Rendon » **Page 56**

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Leaving a mark

Record-setting runner Perry matured into commanding leader for Navy

BY BILL WAGNER

The Capital (Annapolis, Md.)

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — As an offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach, Ivin Jasper has thoroughly enjoyed watching Malcolm Perry run wild on the football field.

Perry has provided three straight seasons of spectacular highlights, running his way into the Navy football record book in breakthrough style.

As a teacher and mentor, Jasper's heart has been filled with joy about witnessing Perry's transformation from a boy into a man.

"It's been really neat to watch Malcolm mature. He's grown up so much since we first met at the prep school," Jasper said this week.

That meeting took place at the Naval Academy Prep School when Jasper traveled to Newport, R.I., to spend some time and get to know his future protégé. Perry was shy, reticent and a youngster of very few words in the summer of 2015.

SEE LEADER ON PAGE 57

Army's Hopkins could get one final chance to enhance renowned legacy

BY JUSTIN FEDICH

The Times Herald-Record (Middletown, N.Y.)

WEST POINT — The broad-shouldered quarterback who runs through 250-pound linebackers on Saturdays still has a copy of "The Big Friendly Giant" in his closet.

When Kelvin Hopkins was a second-grader at Trinity Episcopal School in Charlotte, N.C., his imagination didn't take him to West Point. He just wanted to understand what he was reading. It was challenging, frustrating even. Hopkins had the drive, but he lacked the natural ability to comprehend his schoolwork. His teacher that year gifted him a copy of the same book that remains in his house in Charlotte, with a note: "You can do it. Put in the time and effort."

Those words stuck with Hopkins. He learned that though he might not be the most book smart in his class, though he might not be the biggest, tallest football player on his team, it wasn't an excuse. It was a chance to prove himself.

SEE LEGACY ON PAGE 57

Navy quarterback Malcolm Perry, above, and Army's Kelvin Hopkins Jr., right

AP, TNS photos

NFL exec: 'Angst' over interference reviews » **Page 60**

